

VE

U545

U.S. Marine Corps.  
...

*our first year in*

# KOREA



accounts  
by the  
Historical Branch, G-3,  
Headquarters Marine Corps

Reprinted from the  
Marine Corps Gazette  
Professional Journal of the  
Marine Corps Association

PROPERTY OF  
HISTORICAL BRANCH, G-3  
HEADQUARTERS MARINE CORPS  
PLEASE RETURN TO ROOM *3127*

## CONTENTS

1. "The Pusan Perimeter: Fight for a Foothold," by Lynn Montross.  
(Marine Corps Gazette, Jun 1951, 30-39)
2. "The Inchon Landing - Victory Over Time and Tide," by Lynn Montross.  
(Ibid., Jul 1951, 26-35)
3. "The Capture of Seoul; Battle of the Barricades," by Lynn Montross.  
(Ibid., Aug 1951, 26-37)
4. "Minute Men - 1950 Model; the Reserves in Action," by  
Captain Ernest H. Giusti. (Ibid., Sep 1951, 22-31)
5. "Wonsan to the Reservoir; Red China Enters the Fight," by  
Lynn Montross. (Ibid., Oct 1951, 30-39)
6. "Breakout from the Reservoir; Marine Epic of Fire and Ice,"  
by Lynn Montross. (Ibid., Nov 1951, 22-36)
7. "The Hungnam Evacuation; Amphibious Landing in Reverse," by  
Lynn Montross. (Ibid., Dec 1951, 18-27)
8. "The Pohang Guerrilla Hunt; 1600 Square Miles of Trouble," by  
Lynn Montross. (Ibid., Jan 1952, 18-27)
9. "Buttoning Up the Offensive; the Marines in Operation Killer,"  
by Lynn Montross. (Ibid., Feb 1952, 30-39)
10. "Advance to the 38th Parallel; the Marines in Operation Ripper,"  
by Lynn Montross. (Ibid., Mar 1952, 18-27)
11. "Marine Air Over the Pusan Perimeter," by Ernest H. Giusti.  
(Ibid., May 1952, 18-27)
12. "Marine Air Over Inchon-Seoul," by Ernest H. Giusti and  
Kenneth W. Condit. (Ibid., Jun 1952, 18-27)
13. "Marine Air at the Chosin Reservoir," by Kenneth W. Condit and  
Ernest H. Giusti. (Ibid., Jul 1952, 18-25)
14. "Marine Air Covers the Breakout," by Kenneth W. Condit and  
Ernest H. Giusti. (Ibid., Aug 1952, 20-27)
15. "All in a Day's Work; the Engineers and Shore Party in Korea,"  
by Lynn Montross. (Ibid., Sep 1952, 24-31)
16. "March of the Iron Cavalry; Marine Tanks in Korea," by  
Lynn Montross. (Ibid., Oct 1952, 46-54)
17. "Marine Artillery in Korea," by Kenneth W. Condit.  
(Ibid., Nov 1952, 26-32)

CONTENTS - Continued

18. "They Make Men Whole Again; the Medical Battalion and Chaplains in Korea," by Lynn Montross. (Ibid., Dec 1952, 42-49)
19. "Marine Supply in Korea," by Kenneth W. Condit. (Ibid., Jan 1953, 48-55)
20. "Red China on the Offensive," by Lynn Montross. (Ibid., Jul 1953, 16-24)
21. "Advance to the Punchbowl," by Lynn Montross. (Ibid., Aug 1953, 14-23)
22. "Flying Windmills in Korea," by Lynn Montross. (Ibid., Sep 1953, 16-25)

By Lynn Montross

Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps

\*\*\*\*\*

(c)

PROPERTY OF  
HISTORICAL BRANCH, G-3  
HEADQUARTERS MARINE CORPS  
PLEASE RETURN TO ROOM 3127

# The Pusan Perimeter: Fight For A Foothold

*By Lynn Montross*

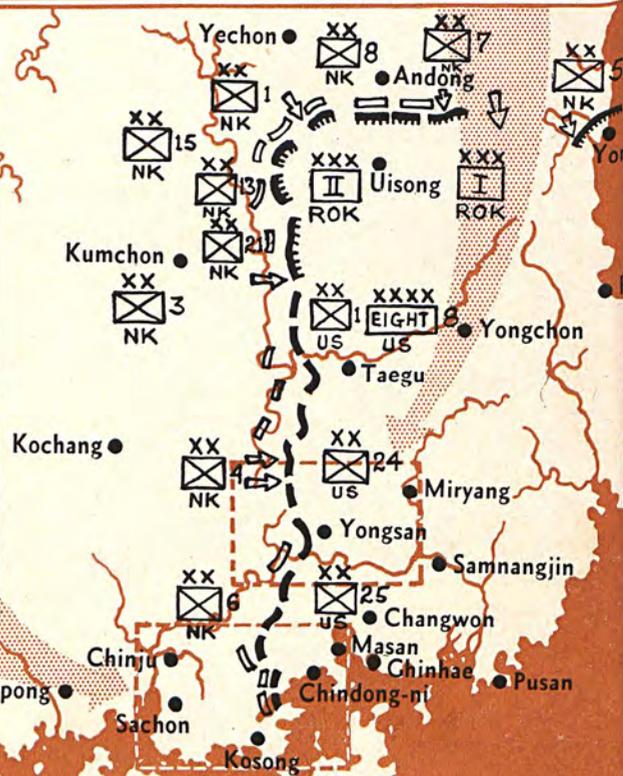
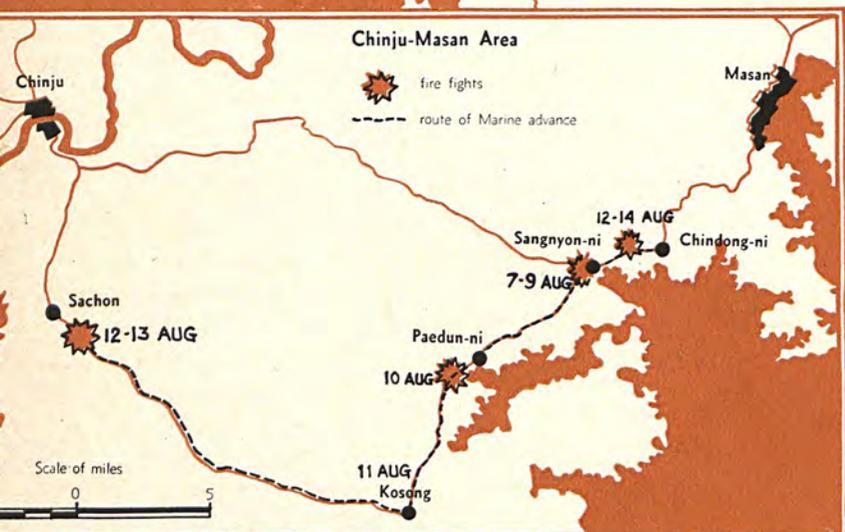
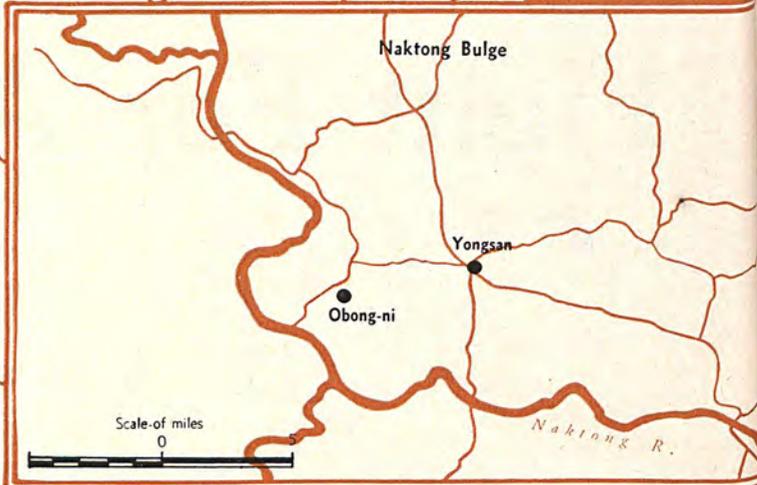
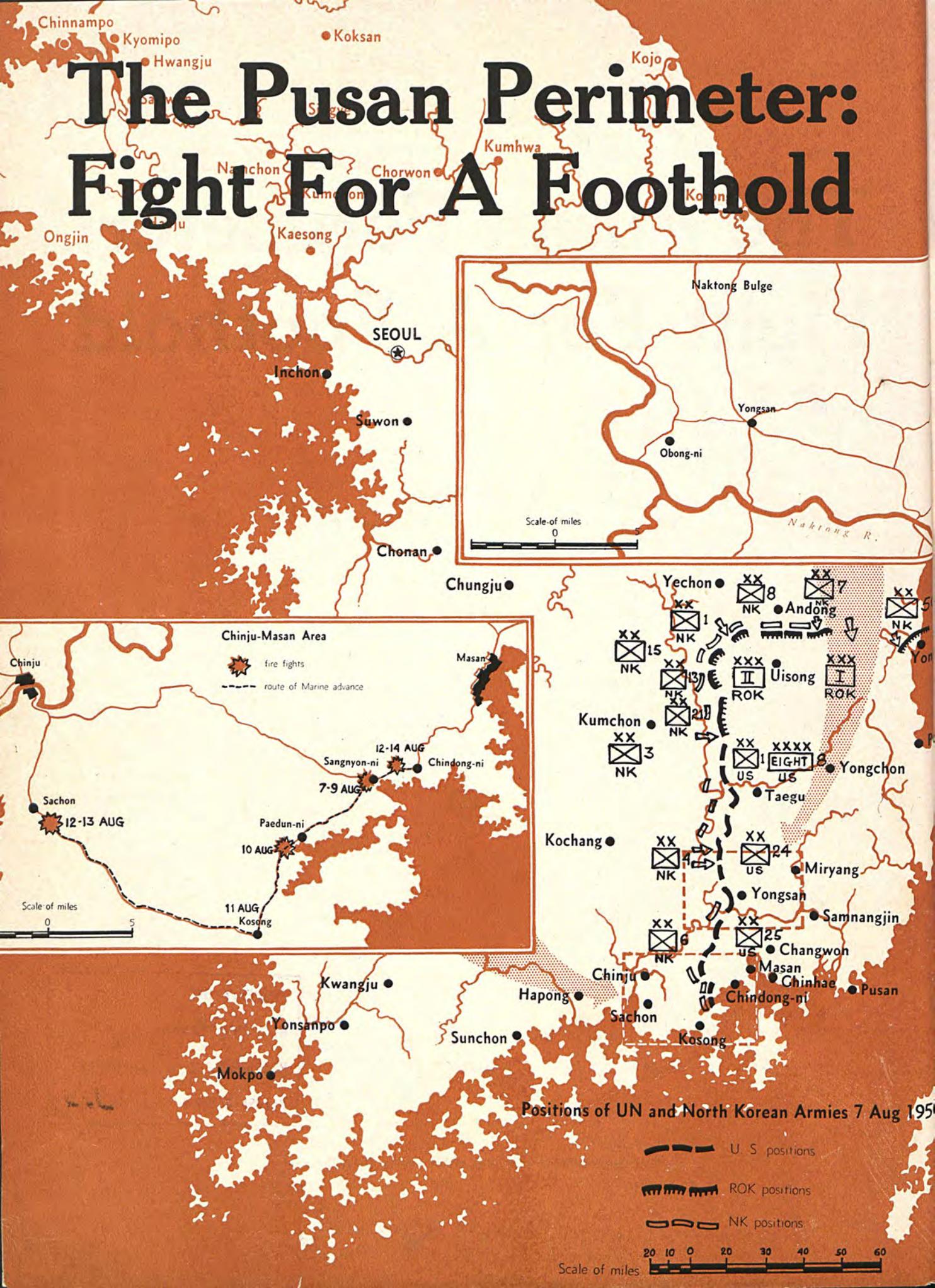
Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps



000307

PROPERTY OF  
HISTORICAL BRANCH, G-3  
HEADQUARTERS MARINE CORPS  
PLEASE RETURN TO ROOM *3127*

# The Pusan Perimeter: Fight For A Foothold



Positions of UN and North Korean Armies 7 Aug 1950

- U.S. positions
- ROK positions
- NK positions



THE 1ST PROVISIONAL MARINE BRIGADE LOST NO time at going into action in Korea. On 14 July 1950, when the ground troops sailed from San Diego, their destination was Japan for a brief training period. During the next 10 days, however, the military situation deteriorated so rapidly that Gen Douglas MacArthur ordered the Brigade to proceed directly to Korea.

On 2 August, as the men landed at Pusan, the enemy was about 40 miles from that seaport. The next morning the main body of the Brigade moved east by rail to a bivouac near Masan in Eighth U. S. Army reserve. And on 7 August, the eighth anniversary of the Guadalcanal landing, the Marines launched the first of three counter-attacks which would restore Eighth Army lines.

Not much encouragement could be derived at that date from the political and strategic background. As early as 10 May the Defense Minister of the Republic of Korea had warned the United Nations Commission that North Korean forces were moving toward the 38th Parallel. He estimated their total strength at 183,000 men and 173 tanks, including 25,000 veterans of Chinese Communist campaigns. The ROK army, hastily built up from a national constabulary, numbered about 100,000 men. Most of the units had received little training, but there was a general lack of such arms as tanks, artillery, and antitank weapons.

On 25 June 1950, when the first NK columns crossed the 38th Parallel, it could not be doubted that the Democratic People's Republic of North Korea was carrying out Soviet policies. Nor was it any secret that the invading army had been trained by Soviet instructors and armed with Soviet weapons.

The United Nations and President Truman met the challenge with dramatic promptness. Military sanctions were ordered against the aggressors on 28 June, and four days later the first U. S. Army troops landed in Korea.

On 2 July the Chief of Naval Operations, with the concurrence of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, granted Gen MacArthur's request for a Marine RCT with its own air. This was the inception of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, made up of the 5th Marine Regiment, the 1st Battalion of the 11th Marines, and MAG-33—a total of 6,534 men, including supporting troops.

BrigGen Edward A. Craig commanded this air-ground team composed largely of troops stationed in California. On 13 July, as Marine embarkation began, LtGen Walton W. Walker assumed command of the Eighth U. S. Army in Korea (EUSAK), numbering 43,146 men in Korea and Japan.

Gen MacArthur had already warned the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 9 July to expect a major conflict against a well trained and equipped enemy. His prediction was confirmed during the next three weeks as U. S. and ROK troops fell back before materially superior invaders.

In cooperation with the Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, the GAZETTE herewith presents the first of a series of official accounts dealing with Marine operations in Korea. Prepared by writers and researchers of the Historical Division, these articles are based on available records and reports from units in Korea. The following will be treated in this series:

Mobilization and Movement to Korea  
Operations in the Pusan Perimeter  
The Inchon-Seoul Amphibious Campaign  
The Chosin Reservoir Breakout  
Anti-Guerrilla Operations in South Korea  
The Drive to the 38th Parallel

Publication is scheduled for consecutive monthly issues, except for mobilization, which will not appear in order.

Admittedly it is too soon to write a definitive history of Marine fighting in Korea. Not only are enemy sources lacking, but even Marine and Army records are still incomplete. Articles of the length to be used in the GAZETTE, moreover, do not allow space for more than an outline of operations which will ultimately be given the detailed treatment of a monograph.

But timeliness is also an end to be sought, and these preliminary narratives are based on Marine and Army reports received up to this time. These articles are presented in the hope that GAZETTE readers will feel free to add to the incomplete record. This is an invitation, therefore, for you to supplement the existing record. Send your comments and criticisms, as well as any other information you can make available, to the Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, Washington 25, D. C.

Taejon (Map, page 30) had to be evacuated on 21 July when the line of the river Kum could not be held. The out-weighted UN forces, their left flank dangling, were unable to prevent the enemy from making an end run in the direction of Pusan.

Nonsan, Namwon, and Hadong fell in dismaying succession to invaders sweeping around to the UN rear, opposed only by militarized ROK police. Gen Walker met the threat on 25 July by shifting the 24th Division (less the 21st Infantry) to the Chinju area with a blocking mission. The North Koreans continued to make daily gains, however, with an estimated two to three regiments of the 6th Division. On the last day of the month they drove southward and eastward to the occupation of Chinju, about 50 miles west of Pusan. On the central front other enemy forces reached the river Naktong, and on the east coast a NK column pushed southward to capture Yongdok from ROK defenders.

EUSAK spokesmen described the situation as "fluid," but the Pusan perimeter was already taking shape. Taegu, the hub of the rail net, was about 50 miles from Pusan, which meant that EUSAK had a larger perimeter than its scanty forces could defend except at key points. The intermittent "line" of defense positions stretched from the secondary port of Pohang on the east coast to the Naktong, then dipped to the south coast in the vicinity of Masan, only 35 miles from Pusan.

This irregular semicircle, about 120 miles in length, or



a smaller one, had to be held at the peril of a new Dunkirk. The defenders had only seven understrength divisions on 1 August. EUSAK consisted of the 24th Division and most of the elements of the 25th and 1st Cavalry Divisions—42,199 men in all, including supporting troops. Air Force units added 3,527 to the total. Alongside these U. S. divisions were four battered ROK divisions, in action since 25 June.

Eleven enemy divisions had been identified by this date. The seven which launched the invasion were those numbered from the 1st to 6th, including a large proportion of veterans of Chinese Communist campaigns, and the 15th. Four more divisions, hastily raised from border constabulary units, were thrown into action before the end of July.

At the outset Gen MacArthur had necessarily to draw upon occupation forces in Japan, including many recent recruits not ready for combat. The first contingents, making contact with the enemy on 5 July, found themselves plunged into a melancholy land of bleak mountains and fetid rice paddies. Friend could not readily be distinguished from foe in a swarming Oriental population, and too often a group of supposed South Korean civilians proved to be disguised enemy soldiers.

Throughout July an atmosphere of failure and confusion oppressed the men at the front and communicated itself to the public at home. Pearl Harbor had been a shock that energized and united Americans in a day. Korea, in contrast, was only enough of a disillusionment to arouse grumbling. It was hard for soldiers and civilians alike to realize that an Asiatic peninsula might become the Spain of a third World War.

August threatened to be a critical month for Pusan, caught between the devil and the deep blue sea. Thus the arrival of the Marines was timely, following the debarkation of the 2nd Infantry Division and Army 5th RCT at Pusan the day before.

Reinforcements were sorely needed at a time when five of the seven UN divisions had neared exhaustion. Since the perimeter could not be held in strength everywhere, EUSAK orders of 2 August called for counterattacks against penetrations to disorganize enemy columns, keep them off balance, and prevent them from launching a coordinated effort. At this turning point the Marine air-ground team constituted a welcome unit to be shifted from one sector to another as a mobile, self-contained reserve.

On 4 August the Plans Section of EUSAK completed a study of plans, later approved, for a counterattack along the Masan-Chinju-Hadong axis. Two days later Task Force Kean—named after MajGen William B. Kean, CG of the 25th Division—was organized with a mission of driving west toward Chinju to secure Masan, a secondary port, from future enemy attempts. The primary



**BrigGen Edward A. Craig, USMC, confers with MajGen John H. Church, CG of 24th Division on plans designed to drive the North Koreans out of the Naktong River bulge.**

object was to prevent NK forces in the Chinju area from cutting the Eighth Army off from its Pusan base. This peril was considered imminent in view of reported large hostile troop movements toward the southern front. Later intelligence led to the conclusion that the main enemy effort would be made farther north in the Yongsan sector of the central front. But the plans were not changed, as it was hoped that the Chinju operation would relieve NK pressure on the threatened central front.

Task Force Kean had as its components the 25th Division, the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade (plus an ROK police company), and the Army 5th RCT. The main body of the Marine ground forces, after proceeding by rail on 3 August from Pusan to the Changwon bivouac near Masan, spent three days in EUSAK reserve. Routine patrols were sent out while the Brigade occupied tactical dispositions astride the Masan-Changwon corridor in preparation for further operations. Nervous bursts of night firing occurred in all battalion areas, but no casualties resulted.

These patrols were believed to have provided the occasion for the first air-drops of rations and water by helicopter as well as evacuation of heat casualties. The presence of an enemy patrol was confirmed only once, but no contact could be made, with North Korean soldiers who abandoned their observation post and escaped.

The three days in EUSAK reserve were valuable as an orientation and training period. Despite its hasty buildup, the Brigade could be considered an outfit of combat-ready troops. The 1st Battalion, commanded by



**ABOVE:** Soon after arrival, the Marines marched through Pusan to the railway station for their trip to the front. **LEFT:** Following winding trails over mountainous terrain, the last part of the movement to the front found the Marines subjected to intense heat of Korean summer.



LtCol George R. Newton, was fairly typical. About 300 of the men had been training at Camp Pendleton when the Brigade was activated. Most of the remaining 400 troops of the battalion had thereafter joined from posts and stations on the West Coast. The latter had received no training with the battalion on field problems, but all were basically well grounded. An experienced and able group of officers and NCOs provided a high order of leadership. During the trans-Pacific voyage they conducted shipboard instruction at the squad and platoon level.

The Brigade moved into an assembly area at Chindongni (Map, page 30) on 6 August after being attached to the 25th Division. Relief of a battalion of the 27th Infantry was accomplished by 3/5, under control of CO 27th Infantry for this action. Gen Craig resumed full Brigade control after his other two battalions moved into attack positions that night.

A new chapter of Marine Corps history had begun, and it was fitting that a rifle platoon should draw first blood. Shortly after dark, while the Brigade was still under Army control, CO 27th Infantry directed that a platoon of 3/5 proceed several miles forward to protect the flank of a company reporting heavy pressure. The 1st Platoon of George Company and a MG section were sent by CO 3/5 with a mission of seizing a ridge line. During the advance the first Marine battle casualties of Korea occurred about 0500 on 7 August when enemy



artillery shells wounded two men. Two hours later Lt John J. H. Cahill led 39 men up a slope swept by NK automatic fire. He took his objective at 0900, after making contact with the 27th's infantry company, and held for 24 hours under sporadic mortar and automatic fire until being relieved the next morning by Dog Company of 2/5. Six men of the detachment were killed and 12 wounded, in addition to heat casualties.

The story of the war in Korea might have been written in terms of such rifle platoon actions. Although the American public had been conditioned by irresponsible concepts of push-button warfare, the actual showdown called for the timeworn fundamentals of sound infantry training.

The attack plan of 7 August provided for the Army 5th RCT to jump off at 0630 from positions just beyond Chindong-ni after a brief air-artillery preparation. These assault troops had orders to pass through and relieve the 27th Infantry before advancing to clear the road junction west of Chindong-ni (Map, page 30). When that mission had been accomplished, the Marine Brigade was to jump off from the road junction and initiate its attack along the route toward Kosong. Meanwhile the 5th RCT would continue to advance along the northern fork of the road toward Chinju.

This plan remained in effect until the Army 5th RCT was held up by opposition northwest of Chindong-ni. CG 25th Division then directed that a battalion of Marines relieve the 2d Battalion, Army 5th RCT, so that the attack could proceed. This mission fell to 2/5 of the Marines, and at 1100 the battalion moved out from Sangnyong-ni. Enemy automatic and mortar fire held up the advance, but the extreme heat did as much to delay troops making an exhausting climb. At dusk the Marines had not been able to complete the relief, and an early morning attack was necessary to fight through and relieve the Army battalion. Eight men were killed and 28 wounded in the Marine battalion.

Such stubborn enemy resistance had developed in this area that three days and nights of slugging would ensue before the road junction had been fully cleared. This task absorbed the efforts of the Marine Brigade as well as

**An artillery unit goes into position and gets ready to fire. Helicopter will be used to spot results.**



elements of the Army 5th and 27th Regiments. At 1120 on 7 August Gen Craig was directed by CG 25th Division to assume command of all Army as well as Marine units in the area—a responsibility which he held until relieved by oral instructions late in the afternoon of 9 August after the road junction was cleared.

Where possible the Marine Brigade operated in a column of battalions passing through and relieving one another at successive objectives. Not only was the rugged terrain a factor, but the battalions still had only two rifle companies.\* The great frontages typical of the Korean operations required battalions to commit two companies abreast, leaving no reserve echelon.

☛ SLOW PROGRESS in clearing the road junction was made during the daylight hours of 8 August by the Brigade and Army troops against enemy units identified as the 83rd Motorized and the 13th and 15th Infantry of the 6th Division. The Marines learned to respect a hardy enemy for his skill at camouflage, ambush, infiltration and use of cover. They learned that supporting air and artillery fires often had limited effect on a foe making clever use of reverse slope defenses to offset Marine concentrations. Thus a ridge might protect and conceal an enemy strong point until attackers were too close for supporting fires. At that stage the affairs turned into a fire fight with small arms in which the North Koreans were at no disadvantage despite their handicap in air and artillery.

Rear areas and supply routes were seldom safe from infiltration. A noteworthy example was supplied on the night of 8 August when the enemy threw a road block across the Masan-Chindong-ni MSR behind 2/5, delaying the relief of that Marine battalion by a battalion of the 24th Infantry. CG Brigade ordered 3/5 to the rescue from positions in the vicinity, with two battalions of the 24th Infantry in support. Slow progress was made in staggering heat on the morning of 9 August. Artillery fires and napalm strikes were delivered to enable How Company to seize the high ground commanding the road block. Not until late that afternoon was the weary 2d Battalion relieved.

Meanwhile 1/5 had been ordered on 8 August to advance from defense positions at 2300 in conjunction with an Army 5th RCT effort to complete its mission of clearing the road junction. Although the Leathernecks had to cross a mile-long rice paddy to relieve an Army 5th RCT battalion, not a shot was fired at the single-file column. At 0600, after completing relief, the Marines attacked to seize Objective 1, the high ground to the immediate front. Again the lack of resistance was bewildering, and orders were received to continue the advance along the road to-

\*At Camp Pendleton, as part of the transition from a peace to war footing, third platoons were activated on 5 July. Third companies did not join the Brigade, however, until after operations ended in the Pusan Perimeter.

ward Paedun-ni. About a third of the distance had been covered without opposition when the battalion set up defense positions for the night.

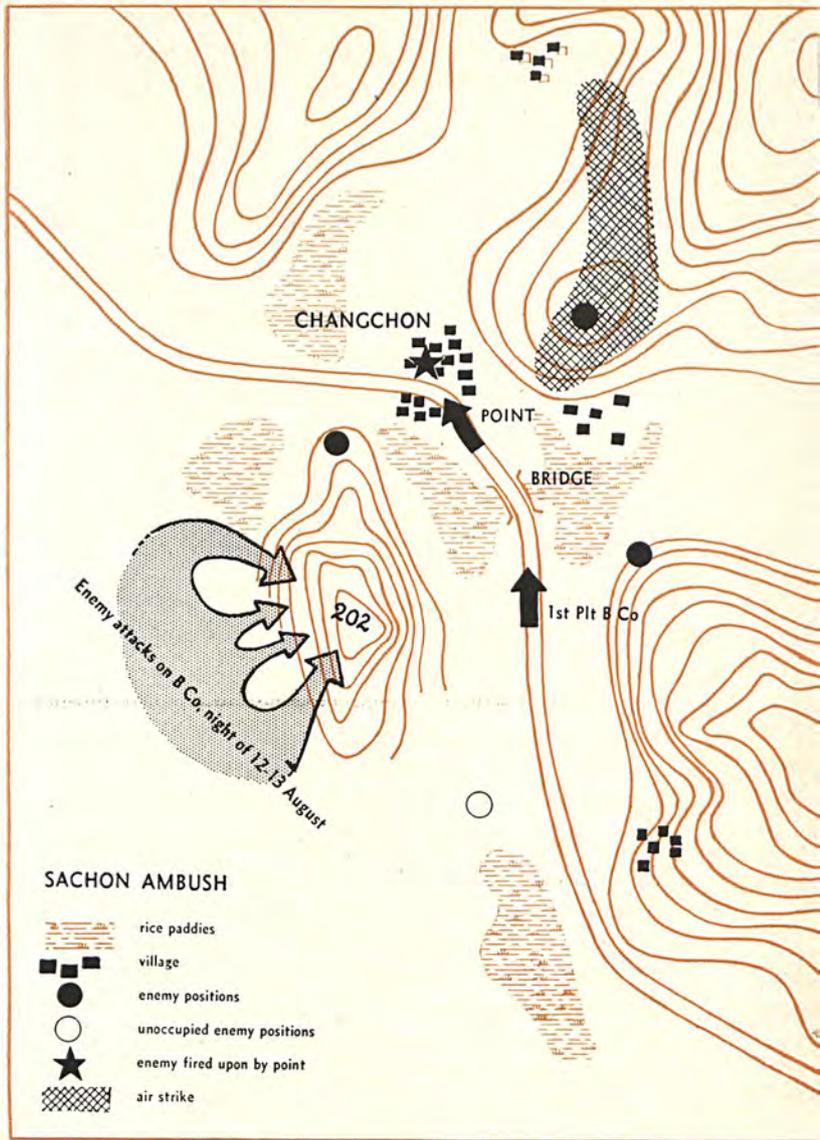
The late afternoon of 9 August dated a turning point. Army 5th RCT reported that the road junction had at last been cleared, permitting forward movement along the northern route toward Chinju. Three days of hard and often confused fighting had dislodged the enemy and forced him into full retreat along both roads in the direction of Kosong and Chinju. These results had been accomplished during a decisive first phase in which Gen Craig held overall command in the forward area. Then, on 10 August, Army elements of the 5th and 27th Regiments reverted from Brigade command to 25th Division control.

The fleeing enemy offered little opposition to the advance of the 10 August. After occupying Paedun-ni at dawn, the Marines advanced 10 miles along the road without any serious action except an attempted enemy ambush defeated by LtCol Harold S. Roise's 2d Battalion with air and tank support.

FATIGUE AND HEAT continued on 11 August to be the main foes of troops who had known little sleep or rest in four days and nights. As the Brigade moved toward Kosong against light opposition, the 35th RCT had covered most of the distance to Chinju along the northern axis. Pockets of resistance were encountered, but the enemy was withdrawing everywhere and even abandoning equipment. The 1st Battalion, 11th Marines hastened this process by shelling Kosong. Enemy transport led a disorderly flight from the town, and Marine air had a turkey shoot at the expense of a column estimated at 40 vehicles. About half were destroyed and the rest damaged in repeated attacks by the Corsairs.

Although the UN forces were criticized for being road-bound, this episode hinted that the enemy had fewer difficulties because he had fewer vehicles. Only human transport could traverse the rice paddies and hilltops; but the North Koreans were driven to that expedient by UN planes which controlled the roads in daylight hours.

The enemy, according to EUSAK estimates, began the invasion with 122 planes of all types, most of which were destroyed by the middle of July. Only infrequent flights by single aircraft were reported afterwards, and Marine fliers met no resistance in their element. Despite the enemy's lack of air reconnaissance, his artillery was surprisingly effective at times. As an example, a 122mm projectile knocked out one of our 105mm howitzers with a direct hit on 7 August, killing two men and wounding eight of B Battery, 11th Marines. Enemy intelligence commanded respect, and his intermittent firing practices permitted well camouflaged gun positions to be long concealed from air observation.



The evacuation of Kosong occurred just as LtCol Robert D. Taplett's 3/5 passed through the other two battalions. Beyond the town the fast-moving advance troops bore down on the NK 83rd Motorized in the confusion of escape, and infantry combined with air to leave the road strewn with enemy dead and wrecked transport. Some of the Soviet-made vehicles were captured intact and put to good use by Marines slowed by transport shortages and limitations.\*

At dusk on 11 August, after reaching high ground 2,400 yards west of Kosong, the Brigade halted with orders to attack toward Sachon in the morning. The 1st Battalion leapfrogged the 3rd at daybreak and advanced for seven hours against negligible opposition to a ridge within sight of Sachon. It could hardly have been imagined at this moment that a beaten enemy was coiled to strike his two boldest blows of the campaign.

\*Many vehicles were left on the dock at San Diego because of shipping shortages. But the Brigade discovered that even the full allowance of equipment would not have been sufficient.



The first developed when 24th Infantry elements were surprised by enemy infiltrating 25 miles to the rear and overrunning artillery positions on the MSR west of Chindong-ni. At noon on 12 August, CO 5th Marines, carrying out 25th Division instructions, ordered 3/5 to the new road block by motor lift. Arriving at 1600, G and H companies attacked to secure their first objectives before dusk. Several hot fire fights took place the next day before How Company advanced with supporting air, artillery, and 4.2 mortar fires to clear the MSR.

Meanwhile, as the other two Marine battalions continued the advance toward Sachon, the enemy demonstrated that ambush as well as infiltration was an ever-present threat of North Korean tactics. At 1400 on 12 August the 1st Battalion, with a reconnaissance company detachment leading, entered a U-shaped defile east of the town.

This was the beginning of the affair known as the Sachon Ambush (Map, page 35). As a test of Marine and enemy techniques, it is perhaps the most instructive fire fight of the operation.

The reconnaissance detachment, acting as the point, promptly unmasked enemy intentions by spotting four NK soldiers hurrying toward their machine gun emplacements (Point C). Fire was immediately opened when return fire revealed additional positions (Points A). Baker Company deployed on the left side of the road and Able on the right.

A platoon of tanks, attached to the battalion, soon got into the fight. Maneuver was prevented by rice paddies lying between the road and high ground. But tank fires were directed by platoon leaders using such SCR 536s as had not been put out of commission by mud and water. CO Baker Company, after orienting himself, further briefed the tanks on his SCR 300. After rogering for this orientation, the tanks put down the fire requested by platoon leaders.

Tanks covered the laborious advance of the 3rd Platoon of Baker Company across an ankle-deep rice paddy to seize a hill on the left flank. Covered by these support-

**Marines crouch near burning North Korean tank as other Marines begin to deploy after crossing a rice paddy.**



ing fires, the 3rd Platoon reached the crest of Hill 202 but was driven back by superior enemy numbers counter-attacking from the reverse slope. Artillery was called into action to get the platoon off the hill. The Corsairs strafed the indicated area with repeated runs, and artillery laid down about 30 minutes of fire.

Nearly every supporting arm had figured in a combat which might otherwise have cost Baker Company far more than the actual three dead and 13 wounded. At 1745 the battalion advanced again to occupy the high ground to defend for the night. This advance caught the enemy withdrawing and killed 38 at no cost to the Marines in casualties.

☛ WORD CAME just before midnight that the Brigade had 25th Division orders to move to a new front. In the 1st Battalion area the two rifle companies were separated by a gap of 800 yards covered by 4.2 mortars and artillery. At 0450, with the withdrawal beginning, a flare revealed artillery as well as 4.2 and 81 mortar fire laid down almost in the laps of the infantry. As a final touch, three 3.5 rocket launchers were credited with knocking out two machine guns and killing the crews.

By daybreak Baker Company had reorganized for a counterattack, but Battalion ordered the withdrawal to continue as supporting fires escorted the covering 2nd Platoon safely down the slope. This last fight cost the company 12 killed, 16 wounded, and nine missing, presumed dead.

The Leathernecks were reluctant to turn their backs on Sachon with the final objective within grasp. It doubtless seemed to them that the six-day operation had accomplished nothing, since Army units advancing on Chinju were also pulled back from their objective. But events were to prove that the enemy had been stopped cold after penetrating within 35 miles of Pusan—the high tide of the North Korean advance. Never again would the invaders be able to mount a serious threat on this sensitive southern front. In this operation Brigade estimates placed the casualties of the three NK regiments at about 1,900.

CG 25th Division ordered the Marines to withdraw from the vicinity of Sachon by motor and LST to the Chindong-ni area, and the 3rd Battalion (with its road clearing mission completed) reverted to Brigade control. The men proceeded from Chindong-ni by motor lift to the railhead at Masan, where they had their first hot meal since landing in Korea nearly two weeks before. Unhappily, the train pulled in before half of them had eaten. The Brigade reached its assembly area at Miryang on 14 August. There it passed by EUSAK orders to operational control of the 24th Division.

The Marines had scarcely time to clean their weapons at Miryang before being sent back into action again.

Enemy pressure in the Naktong Bulge of the central front had created a menace even before the Sachon-Chinju operation ended. This situation resulted in 24th Division orders for the Brigade to move by Army and organic motor lift on 16 August to previously reconnoitered positions in the Yongsan area (Map, page 35).

The NK 4th Division had established two Naktong bridgeheads and crossed to occupy strong positions along ridge lines. Farther north in the U. S. 24th Division sector, the NK 29th Regiment of the 10th Division had also penetrated east of the river. EUSAK concluded that the enemy would drive toward Taegu or attempt to sever the Taegu-Pusan MSR, and counterattacks were ordered to hurl the invaders back across the river.

Along the line of departure the Eighth Army forces consisted from left to right of the Marine Brigade, 9th Infantry, 34th Infantry, and 1st Battalion of the 21st Infantry. Enemy forces east of the river were estimated at a reinforced division supported by artillery and tanks.

The fight of 17 August will always be known to the Marines by the name of Obong-ni Ridge. This enemy strongpoint in the immediate front of the Brigade consisted of mortar and machine gun emplacements along the reverse slope of a barren, rocky spur ranging from 100 to 150 meters in height.

THE 2D BATTALION led the Marine advance from a Brigade line of departure just east of the ridge, designated as Objective 1. As the men climbed the slope on a two-company front, they were held up by flanking automatic fire from the vicinity of Tugok (Map, page 38) on the right and right rear. This opposition came from the zone of the 9th Infantry, which had met heavy resistance on ridges north and east of Tugok.

The delay in the 9th Infantry advance compelled the Marine Brigade to ask permission for neutralizing the Tugok area with air and artillery fires. Meanwhile the 2d Battalion fought its way to the top of Obong-ni Ridge three times, only to withdraw to defense lines halfway down the slope after finding the position untenable. Repeated Marine air strikes blasted the enemy along the reverse slope, but in effect was limited by a shortage of the napalm bombs which would have been better for this work than the high explosive used.

Dog and Easy Companies held tenaciously as the enemy rolled fragmentation and concussion bombs down the slope. At 1500 the 1st Battalion passed through to continue the assault. Advancing in platoon columns against flanking as well as frontal fire, Able and Baker companies paid with casualties for every foot of stony ground. The sun had set when the battalion fought its way to the top, and during the last minutes of daylight three NK tanks approached on the road curving around the ridge into Marine positions.



Taking advantage of cover afforded by tank, Marines direct fire from tank to knock out enemy strong point.

Up to this time Company A of the 1st Tank Battalion had encountered no enemy armor. But on the evening of 17 August a Marine tank platoon, supplemented by 75 recoilless and 3.5 rocket fires, finished off the three hostile tanks in a few seconds, killing all crews. More lessons would be needed, however, before the enemy amended his suicidal tactics of attempting to harass infantry or raid supply lines with unsupported armor. Meanwhile the Marines continued their close cooperation between tanks and infantry, each supporting and protecting the other.

The men of the 1st Battalion expected a counterattack on Obong-ni Ridge and they were not disillusioned. At 0230 on 18 August the glare of 81mm illuminating shells revealed the enemy closing in rapidly. Each NK squad in turn ran forward, hurling grenades and firing burp guns, then hit the deck while another squad advanced. Although the Marines opened up with everything they had one platoon area was isolated and two others penetrated. It was nip and tuck until daybreak, when air and artillery supporting fires aided in restoring positions. By that time Able Company had four officers and 100 men left, while Baker Company had been reduced to two officers and 110 men.

At 1000 the 3rd Battalion passed around the right flank and swept on to take Objectives 2 and 3, the high ground beyond Obong-ni Ridge. Opposition was light and large quantities of arms and ammunition were captured. Enemy resistance seemed to have been broken by heavy losses, and North Korean troops were swimming the Naktong to escape.

Marine ground forces agreed that the close air support in this operation merited superlatives. VMF-214 and VMF-323, operating from aboard the CVE *Sicily* and CVE *Badoeng Strait*, had worked out an effective alternating system for tactical air. After aiding in the reduction of all three objectives, the Corsairs found lucrative targets in the North Korean forces streaming back across the Naktong in disorderly retreat.



In the haste of withdrawal the enemy abandoned much equipment, including artillery, after suffering casualties estimated as high as 4,000. The Army units had met much less resistance on the Marine right, and all forces continued on 19 August to mop up the last pockets of resistance east of the river. Marine patrols were able to make no contact with the enemy that afternoon as orders released the Brigade from 24th Division to EUSAK control. Relief was effected by elements of the 24th Division in defense lines along the high ground of Objective 3. All units closed Yongsan that night and proceeded on 20 August to an assembly area at Changwon in EUSAK reserve.

The period from 22 August to 2 September was devoted to training in weapons familiarization and small unit tactical problems. Several hundred replacements joined the Brigade. Patrols were sent out behind the 25th Division zone of action, and the 1st Battalion of the 11th Marines was detached to CG of that division by EUSAK orders to conduct supporting fires in the Chindong-ni area.

Late in August it became evident that the enemy was poised for a strong new effort to smash through the Pusan perimeter. Several new units had been hastily organized from constabulary troops, so that NK strength was estimated at 13 infantry divisions, three security regiments, an armored division, and two separate armored regiments — a total of about 133,000 men.

On 1 September, when the blow fell, the Marine Brigade was alerted at 0810 by CG EUSAK for a possible

move to some unknown destination. At this time all units were engaged in transferring heavy equipment and supplies to Pusan for the contemplated amphibious landing which would later be known as the Inchon-Seoul operation. Brigade orders were immediately issued to suspend embarkation preparations and stand by for EUSAK orders.

At 1215 EUSAK directed the Brigade to proceed by motor to Miryang (Map, page 35). The 1st Battalion, 11th Marines reverted to Brigade control on this date and re-joined the infantry battalions.

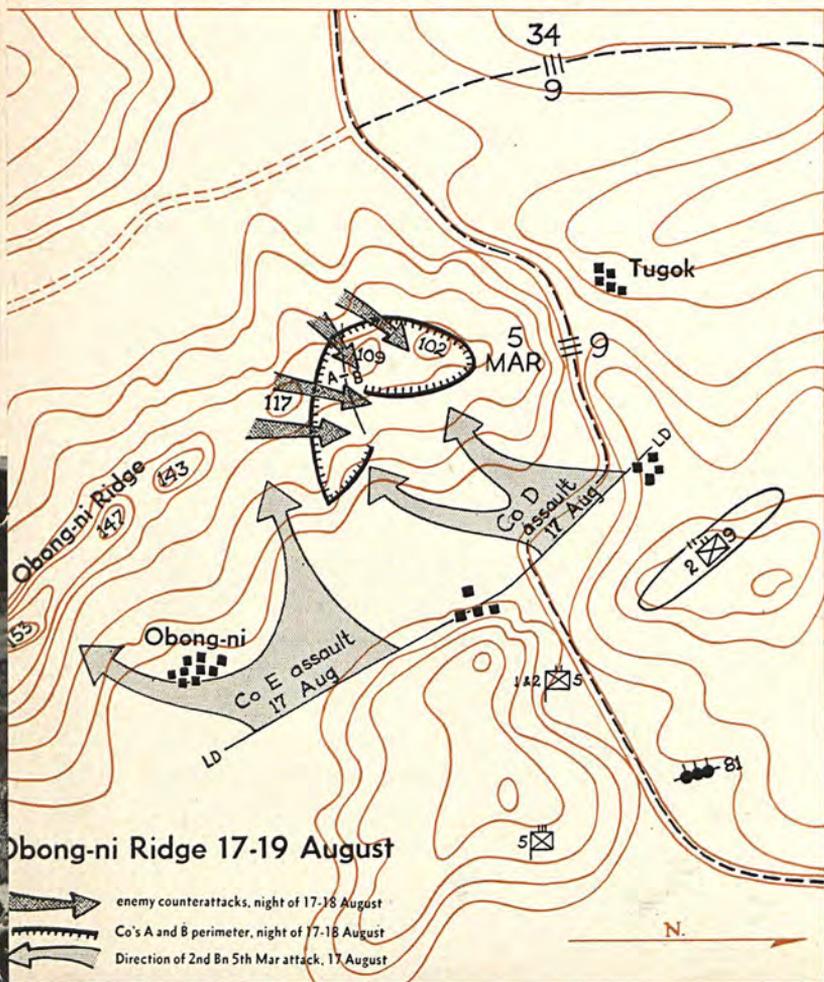
All units closed Miryang by 0630 on 2 September and moved by orders of CG EUSAK toward Yongsan (Map, page 39). Enemy gains east of the Naktong had created the urgent necessity for counterattacks. Yongsan itself had fallen when EUSAK ordered a reinforced Marine battalion to move into the vicinity and protect movement of remaining Brigade elements into an assembly area. There the Marines were to prepare for operation in the 2d Division sector.

AFTER BEING BRIEFED by CG 2d Division in regard to the enemy breakthrough, Gen Craig made recommendations for the employment of the Brigade. The 2d Division plan of maneuver called for the 9th Infantry, which had retaken Yongsan, to hold the high ground 800 yards to the west until the Brigade could pass through the next morning and continue the attack. The 23rd Infantry and 38th Infantry were in line to the right, and the high ground on the left was occupied by a special task force made up of the 72nd Tank Battalion and the 2nd Engineer Battalion. No other force was available to protect the 2d Division's left flank. Enemy forces in the immediate front were believed to be elements of the 2nd, 4th and 9th NK Divisions.

At 0300 on 3 September the Marines moved out to attack positions only a few miles northeast of Obong-ni Ridge. This was the first time that the Brigade used formation of two battalions abreast and one in reserve. The jumpoff was delayed 30 minutes by necessity of fighting to the line of departure 800 yards west of Yongsan. But shortly after dawn the infantry went forward against heavy resistance consisting of automatic tank and artillery fires.

Brigade tanks destroyed four T-34s and the ground troops inflicted an estimated 500 casualties during the first day's advance. The 2d Battalion, which met particularly stiff opposition, had casualties of 18 dead and 70 wounded.

At dusk, after seizing high ground about 3,000 yards west of Yongsan, the 1st and 2nd Battalions dug in and occupied defense lines for the night. On 4 September the Brigade continued the attack at 0800 as the 3rd Battalion passed through the 2nd and advanced on the right of the



1st. The assault troops gained an average of 3,000 to 4,000 yards against moderate opposition and took the high ground designated as Objective 1.\* CG 2d Division authorized a farther advance to phase line two, and the Brigade pushed ahead about 1,000 yards past Objective 1 before consolidating positions for the night.

Again Marine close air support was magnificent, accounting for many of the enemy dead which littered the roads along with abandoned equipment. Marine tanks and antitank fire knocked out two T-34s and four antitank guns during the day. Counterbattery work by 1/11 resulted in the destruction of an estimated nine field pieces and the killing of several hundred retreating NK troops.

On 5 September the Brigade advance scheduled for 0730 had to be postponed until 0815 because of an enemy counterattack in the 9th Infantry area on the right. Rains favored the enemy by making OY observation and close air support impossible. Marine artillery fires, moreover, had to be given the 9th Infantry to aid that regiment in restoring its positions. These factors limited the Brigade artillery preparations to barely five minutes. Nevertheless, the Leathernecks covered 2,500 to 3,000 yards that morning against moderate opposition.

Another NK counterattack developed at 1410 in the 1st Battalion area as an estimated 300 enemy struck with three tanks. Two of our M-26 tanks, firing on troop targets in infantry support, did not observe the approach of the T-34s and were disabled by enemy tank fire, though both crews escaped. All three NK tanks were destroyed by rocket fire laid down by the 1st Battalion.

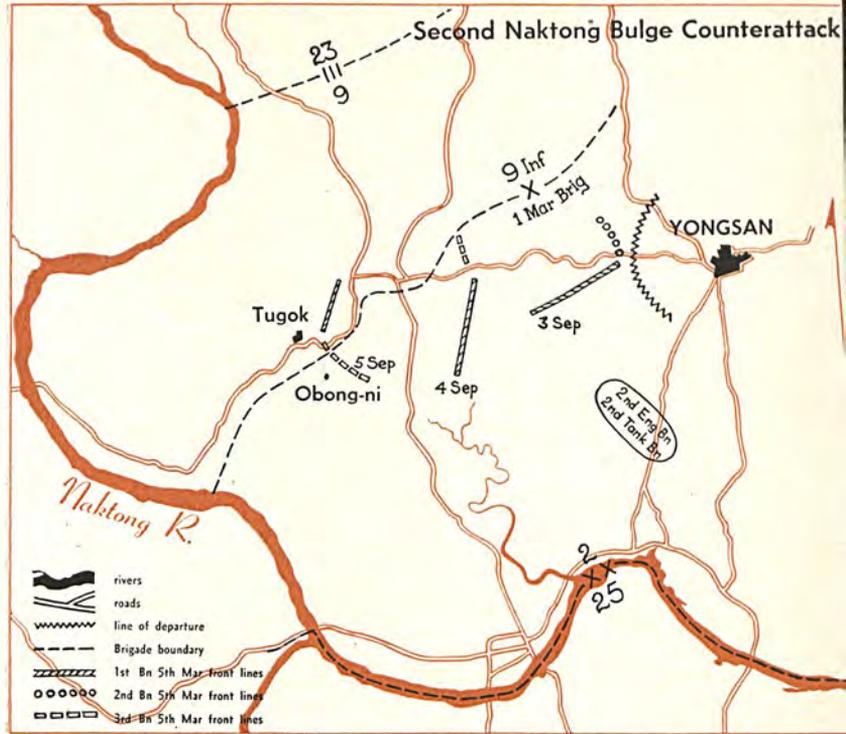
Meanwhile Baker Company succeeded in stopping the counterattack with 81 mortar fire at a cost of two killed and 26 wounded.

That afternoon EUSAK orders released the Brigade from 2nd Division operational control for movement to Pusan by motor and rail. After securing high ground and consolidating positions overlooking near-by Obong-ni Ridge, the Marines were relieved at midnight by elements of the 2nd Division. The movement of the Brigade to Pusan was completed by 1100 on 7 September, and heavy equipment arrived by rail from Miryang.

The Leathernecks were not in on the finish, but the back of the enemy offensive had been broken before they left. And the second battle of the Naktong ended with 2nd Division forces pushing the invaders back until the central front was out of danger.

Altogether, the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade had fought three difficult operations in a month while traveling 380 miles with a third of its organic transportation

\*Fewer and briefer reports were made of the Second Battle of the Naktong than the two preceding operations. This is understandable when it is recalled that the Brigade had on short notice interrupted active preparations for embarkation to help meet this new threat in the Naktong Bulge area.



plus Army vehicles. It is a safe assumption, on the basis of field estimates, that these fights resulted in troop and equipment losses that the enemy could ill afford. And though there is no such thing as a "light" casualty list from a personal viewpoint, a total of 169 Marines killed in action, 720 wounded in action and 12 missing in action was a remarkably low price to pay for the gains achieved.

After the arrival of replacements, third companies joined the Brigade on 7 September. Already the men were training for the next test amid preparations for debarkation. The 3rd Battalion had been designated as the advance landing force for the forthcoming amphibious operation, and rehearsals were conducted in the Pusan area before embarkation on 12 September.

Lacking the perception of hindsight, the departing Marines could not evaluate their contribution to the counterattacks which held the Pusan perimeter. But the Brigade had been summoned three times as a hard-hitting mobile reserve, and on each occasion the Leathernecks sent the enemy reeling back at a critical moment. Events would prove after 15 September that these operations were comparable to solid left jabs setting up an opponent for the knockout. For it was a bruised and bleeding North Korean Army, still hammering futilely at the Pusan perimeter, which had the key to its communications threatened a week later in the Inchon-Seoul amphibious operation.

US & MC

Next Month: The Inchon-Seoul Amphibious Assault



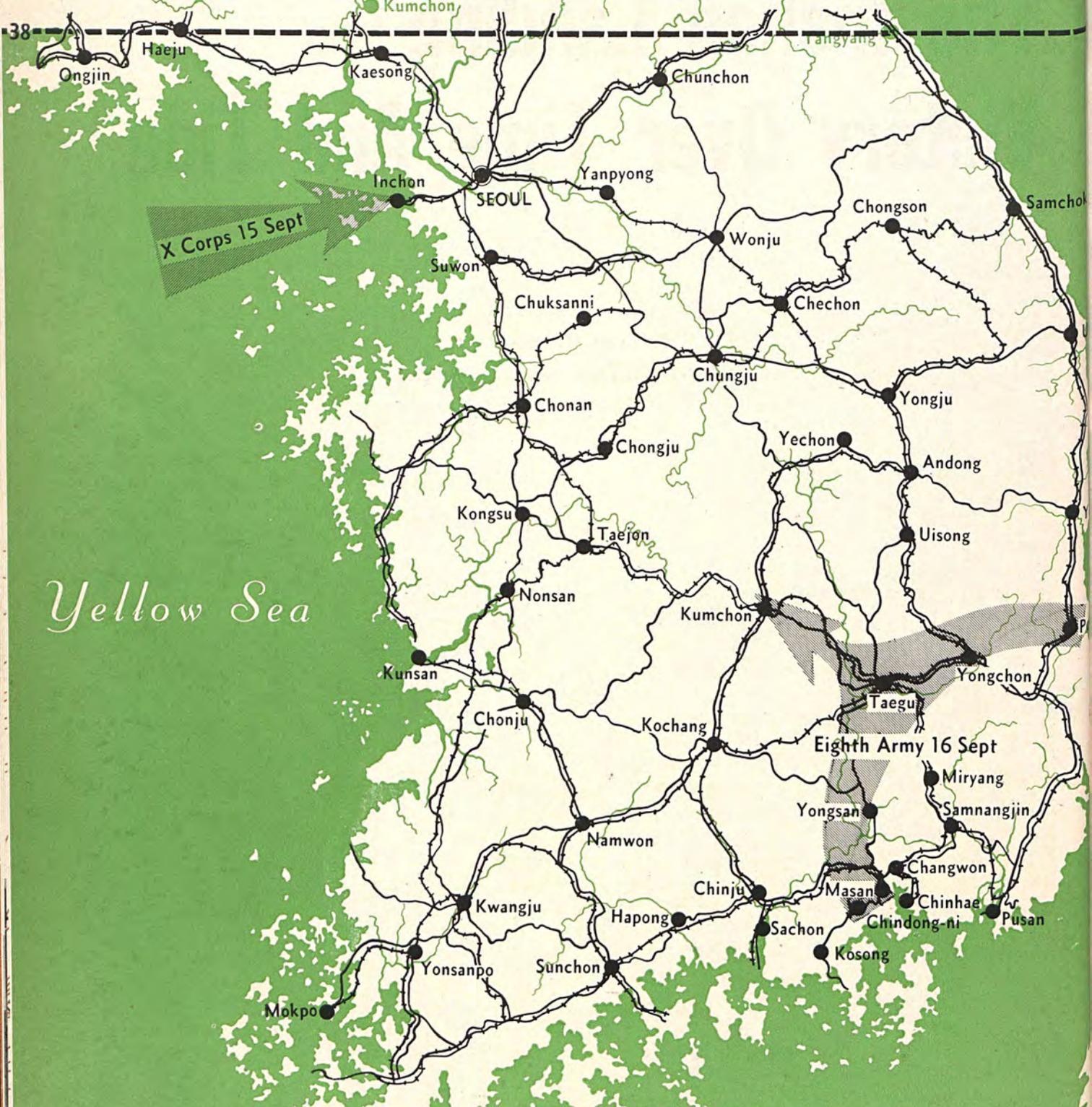
# The Inchon Landing — Victory Over Time And Tide

*By Lynn Montross*

Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps



# The Inchon Landing — Victory Over Time And Tide



UN SEPTEMBER OFFENSIVES

## By Lynn Montross

☛ THERE WAS LITTLE TO INDICATE THAT THE SUNDAY morning of 25 June 1950 was a landmark for thousands of young men all over the United States. As they read their newspapers after breakfast, the pennant chances of the Dodgers probably concerned them more than the outbreak of an intramural war in Korea. It would hardly have occurred to these civilians that it was actually D-Day minus 82 for them. But these young men were Marine reservists, and in less than 12 weeks many of them would be halfway around the earth, making an amphibious landing in a flaming town on an Asiatic peninsula.

The Korean struggle achieved a personal significance for them when the United Nations ordered military sanctions against the Red Korean aggressors. By July 4th, U. S. naval, air, and land forces had been sent to Korea to help enforce those sanctions. It was D-Day minus 73, for an amphibious counterstroke was already being considered by Gen Douglas MacArthur, commander in chief of the UN forces assisting the Republic of Korea.

The strategic importance of the Inchon-Seoul area (Map 1) had been obvious ever since its seizure by North Korean invaders during the early days of the war.<sup>1</sup> Inchon was the principal port of the west coast; Seoul, the hub of the enemy's communication lines between North Korea and his troops pushing into the Republic of Korea. Capture of the two cities would simultaneously disrupt the North Korean Army's rear area and provide the UN forces with a valuable staging and supply point as well as air sites for further offensive operations.

At that time no Marine division was available for the proposed operation, and Gen MacArthur tentatively selected the U. S. Army 1st Cavalry Division. The Marine Corps was then represented in Japan by Mobile Training Group Able, which had arrived before the outbreak of war to instruct Army occupation troops in basic amphibious techniques. Col Edward H. Forney, chief of the group, was appointed G-5 for the 1st Cavalry Division to assist with planning. Other members were sent in teams to camps in Japan with a mission of training troops for the landings.

The plan was abandoned on 10 July, owing to the rapid deterioration of the military situation in Korea. Red Korean invaders had sliced so deeply into ROK territory that it became necessary to use the 1st Cav Div to bolster the existing defense.

For thousands of Marine reservists, still going about their civilian occupations, the critical scene changed to the Pentagon. There, on 22 July, the Joint Chiefs of Staff granted Gen MacArthur's repeated requests (10, 15, and 19 July) for a full-strength Marine division to be

<sup>1</sup>Obvious, in fact, since the occasion in 1871 when the Marines first landed near Inchon. (See GAZETTE, November 1950, p. 24, 56, 57.)

In cooperation with the Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, the GAZETTE herewith presents another in a series of official accounts dealing with Marine operations in Korea. Prepared by writers and researchers of the Historical Division, these articles are based on available records and reports from units in Korea. Also to be treated in this series:

Mobilization and Movement to Korea  
The Chosin Reservoir Breakout  
Anti-Guerrilla Operations in South Korea  
The Drive to the 38th Parallel

Publication is scheduled for consecutive monthly issues, except for mobilization, which will not appear in order.

Admittedly it is too soon to write a definitive history of Marine fighting in Korea. Not only are enemy sources lacking, but even Marine and Army records are still incomplete. Articles of the length to be used in the GAZETTE, moreover, do not allow space for more than an outline of operations which will ultimately be given the detailed treatment of a monograph.

But timeliness is also an end to be sought, and these preliminary narratives are based on Marine and Army reports received up to this time. These articles are presented in the hope that GAZETTE readers will feel free to add to the incomplete record. This is an invitation, therefore, for you to supplement the existing record. Send your comments and criticisms, as well as any other information you can make available, to the Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, Washington 25, D. C.

employed in Korea. It was now D-Day minus 54, but nothing resembling a full-strength Marine division was in sight. Old timers might have sighed for the days before the Fleet Marine Force when the mounting out of an expeditionary force was a relatively informal procedure. These veterans fondly recalled that an expeditionary force was simply "put together at the gangplank" of Marines hastily assembled from Navy Yards and equipped in the simple fashion of that day.

Although warfare had become more complex in 1950, it appeared that such drastic measures might have to be revived if the 1st Marine Division was to be re-constituted within a month. It had but a single infantry regiment early in July—the 5th Marines, which became the principal element of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade and sailed from San Diego on the 14th to take part in the fight to hold the Pusan Perimeter.<sup>2</sup> Including the brigade troops, the division was merely a skeleton organization, on a peacetime T/O, of approximately 8,000 officers and men. For that matter, the active duty Marine Corps of 30 June numbered only 74,279 troops assigned to a wide variety of security, training, and administrative duties.

Even the nostalgic old timers had to admit, however, that the Corps of 1950 had improved in one respect over the past. Although the troops for a full-strength division were not immediately available on a peacetime basis, most

<sup>2</sup>The story of the operations of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade was told in the June Number of the MARINE CORPS GAZETTE. A later article of this series will take up in detail the mobilization of the Reserve and its vital role in filling up the 1st Marine Division.



of the heavy equipment had been stored "in mothballs" since World War II at Barstow and other California depots. Some 500 civilians had to be employed for several weeks to recondition this equipment and load it on flatcars to be sent to the port of embarkation. The long columns of vehicles were driven over the road, not only to save shipping space but also to check their reconditioning.

Unfortunately, the personnel could not be stored in warehouses for an emergency. In order to build the 1st Marine Division up to a war-strength T/O of approximately 22,000, it would be necessary to call up the minute men of 1950—those thousands of Reserve Marines still in their civilian jobs. On 19 July, immediately following presidential authorization, organized reserves were alerted by the Commandant for a call to active duty, with the first units reporting 10 days later. And on 7 August, D-Day minus 39, the Commandant began calling the volunteer reserve. Within a few weeks these Marines would have to be sorted out for assignment to the division, for further training, or to replace regulars who were stripped from posts and stations to join the brigade and the 1st Mar Div. Shades of the gangplank expeditionary forces!

By working an administrative miracle, the 1st Mar Div won the first round of its bout with time and tide when, on 15 August, it reached war-strength (less the 7th Marines) only 27 days after commencing its build-up from a peacetime T/O. A new 1st Marines had been formed, third rifle companies for the 5th Marines organized, support and service units put together—all in an integrated effort by reserves from civilian life, by regulars reporting from other stations, and by supply depots at Barstow and San Francisco.

Round Two commenced on 17 August when the 7th Marines were activated, D-Day minus 29. Two understrength battalions of the 6th Marines arrived at Pendleton from Lejeune to be joined by more regulars and reserves and were designated as 7th Marines. A peace-strength battalion, on duty with the Fleet, sailed from the Mediterranean directly to Japan. A third rifle company and third platoons for the other two companies of this battalion were assembled at Pendleton and embarked with the main body of the 7th Regiment on 3 September, D-Day minus 12.

In Japan, meanwhile, high-level planners were putting the cart before the horse by working on the Inchon-Seoul operation before the landing force was fully organized. As a preliminary measure the Tenth Corps had been activated on 16 August with MajGen Edward S. Almond in command. The principal elements were to be the 1st Mar Div and the U. S. Army 7th Infantry Division, the latter being scarcely more than a cadre in Japan at this time.

General MacArthur wished to land at Inchon not later than favoring tides permitted in September. He con-

sidered this the latest date when the operation could be launched with good prospects of being finished before cold weather. The time was short, therefore, when the X Corps staff was formed on 16 August with the title Special Planning Staff, Far East Command.

Some of the problems awaiting the planners had already been approached by Gen MacArthur's staff. As early as July a Joint Army Navy Intelligence Service report on selected Korean beaches had revealed that high tides and mud flats presented major problems in landing along the entire west coast. When the meteorological and hydrographic data were considered, it became evident that an Inchon landing must surmount unusual if not unique obstacles (Map 2). Low seas were common from May through August, while high seas prevailed from October through March. This left September, a transition period, as the only autumnal month when conditions, though variable, were satisfactory for putting troops ashore.

In all September there were three days when such an



Marines aboard ship are briefed for the Wolmi assault.

operation could be attempted. The tidal range near Inchon is one of the greatest in the world, varying from an average spring tide range of 27.1 feet to an occasional maximum of 33 feet. The extensive mud flats in the harbor area necessitated a tidal height of 23 feet for landing craft, and 29 feet for LSTs. Only from 15 to 18 September were these conditions provided by spring tides, and the next opportunity would not come until the middle of October.

Each of these three days, moreover, offered but a few hours that could be utilized for an amphibious assault. Owing to the tidal currents and narrow channel leading to the objective area, daylight landings were necessary



**Destroyers purposely stand in close to Wolmi Island in order to provoke enemy disclosure of shore batteries.**

for all but selected small groups. The duration of spring tides above the prescribed minimum averaged three to four hours, and during this interval the maximum in troops and supplies must be put ashore. Every minute counted, because initial landing forces could not be reinforced or supplied until the next high water period.

Time and tide, in short, seemed to have combined to protect Inchon from seaborne foes. Islands, reefs, and shoals restricted the approach to the outer harbor, so that only a single channel was available for large ships throughout the last eight miles. Currents ranging from three to six knots multiplied the chances of confusion in an amphibious operation. And much of the inner harbor was a vast mud flat at low water, penetrated by a single, narrow, dredged channel 12 to 13 feet deep.

As if such difficulties were not enough, a brief general survey of the target area was also discouraging. Two islands, Wolmi-do and Sowolmi-do, located in the commanding position between outer and inner harbors, were linked to each other and to Inchon by a causeway. In advance of intelligence reports, it had to be assumed that Wolmi-do would be honeycombed with harbor defenses. This critical terrain feature must be reduced as a preliminary to any larger landing. For Inchon's "beaches" were but narrow strips of urban waterfront, protected by

**Inchon's low tide strands landing ships of the invasion.**



a seawall and flanked by Wolmi-do. The height was too great for ramps to be dropped at any stage of the tide, and some method must be found for the assault troops to scale the wall under fire. Once past, there remained the task of seizing a city of 250,000 inhabitants as the initial beachhead.

Even with all these obstacles, Inchon offered the best combination available on Korea's west coast for favorable landing conditions and proximity to the strategic objective. The greatest unknown in the equation was the resistance to be expected in the target area. Even assuming that most of the North Korean troops would be engaged to the southward, it was conceivable that only a few thousand defenders might turn an Inchon landing into another Tarawa.

These were the broad aspects of the problem remaining to be solved by high-level planners. Both Gen MacArthur and Gen Almond left no doubt from the beginning that Marines were to share in the planning. Shortly after the outbreak of the Korean war, LtGen Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, conferred in Tokyo with Gen MacArthur concerning the movement of Marine elements to the Far East. Following the formation of the X Corps staff, Col Forney was designated as deputy chief of staff, responsible for all amphibious planning. In addition, Gen Almond wished to have one Marine officer attached to each staff section in a regular capacity along with Army and Navy officers. Marines of Mobine Training Group Able, therefore, were assigned as working members to the X Corps staff.

CG 1st Mar Div was given the responsibility for the detailed planning concerned the employment of his division, the X Corps' landing force. Gen MacArthur requested early in August that an advance planning group be sent by air from Pendleton to Tokyo. 12 officers and six enlisted men of the 1st Division staff left California on 15 August, and a second group of 11 officers and four enlisted men took off four days later. These groups reached Tokyo on 19 and 22 August and reported to Commander Naval Forces Far East (COMNAVFE) on board the *Mount McKinley*, flagship of Commander Amphibious Group One (Commander Attack Force).

From the beginning the relationship between the 1st





Mar Div as landing force and Phib Group One as attack force was clear and in accordance with USF doctrine. But the command status and responsibilities for the assault landing phase of CG X Corps, Commander Joint Task Force 7, and COMNAVFE remained "vague and confusing." None of these commands ever appeared under well defined titles which, under existing amphibious doctrine, would have been appropriate to the echelons involved.

Not only were unusual limitations of time and space a factor in 1st Mar Div detailed planning, but also the separation of the planning group from the remainder of the division while the brigade was in action in southern Korea and other elements had not yet departed Pendleton. As an added responsibility, Marines had a part in the amphibious training of the U. S. Army 7th Inf Div. Before being attached to X Corps, this unit had been stripped of troops to strengthen other Army divisions in Korea. Only a skeleton organization remained, with some of the companies being reduced to 50 men. At this stage the members of Mobile Training Group Able were given a two-fold mission—while some of them served on the X Corps planning staff, others had the duty of training 7th Div troops in amphibious techniques. Marine teams visited the camps in Japan, giving instruction while new increments, including 8,000 Korean troops, brought that division up to war strength. A remarkable build-up and training task was accomplished to ready the 7th Div for operations following its D-day-plus-four landings at Inchon.

Meanwhile, planners of X Corps and the 1st Mar Div worked against time. Only about 20 days stretched ahead of them for the preliminary studies, estimates, assumptions, and decisions which were eventually boiled down into an order to "seize by amphibious assault, occupy, and defend a beachhead in the Inchon area; transport, land, and support the follow-up elements of the X Corps, in order to support the seizure by the X Corps of Inchon, Kimpo AF, and Seoul; the blocking of enemy forces south of the line Suwon-Inchon, and the severance of enemy communications in the Seoul area."

Much depended on X Corps intelligence reports when it came to dealing with problems concerning the target area. The question as to the ability of LVTs to traverse the mud flats of Inchon harbor could not be satisfactorily answered. Planning, therefore, went ahead on the assumption that they could not. And aerial photographic coverage revealed that the seawall along the Inchon waterfront averaged 16 feet above low water.

Advance estimates of enemy numbers and installations were based on aerial observation as well as Eighth Army reports and PW interrogations in southeastern Korea. Initial X Corps estimates placed the Red Korean strength in the Inchon area at 1,500 to 2,500 troops. Photographic interpretation showed a formidable array of defensive

positions, but most of them appeared to be unoccupied. Daily aerial observation reports during the planning period indicated an almost complete lack of enemy activity.

On the assumption that enemy resistance in the harbor area would be light, X Corps planners accepted the calculated risk which is a distinguishing feature of the Inchon landing. This was the bold decision to seize Wolmi-do Island during the early morning high tide when tanks could be landed (Map 2), then postpone the main assault at Inchon until late afternoon high tide. This plan gave the enemy a 12-hour warning during which to prepare a warm reception for the main effort.

The alternative of attacking both objectives simultaneously was dismissed as an even greater hazard. In that case the landing craft for the Inchon assault would have to traverse a narrow and tortuous channel in the pre-dawn darkness. The troops, moreover, would be exposed to point-blank enfilade fire from Wolmi-do's batteries.

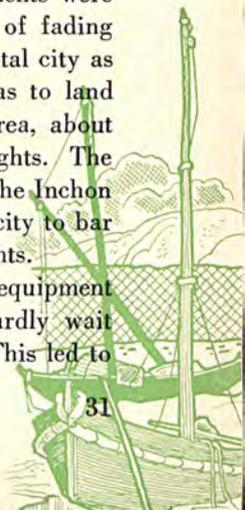
The planners agreed that this key to the harbor defenses must be seized first. But they did not propose to place too much trust in advance intelligence reports indicating light resistance. This factor could better be determined in advance of D-Day by moving up a few destroyers almost within pistol range to bombard the island, challenging enemy batteries to return fire and disclose their positions.

This bold plan revived in earnest the good old Navy command, "Stand by to repel boarders!" The daring mission of the destroyers involved the risk of grounding on the mud flats and being left high and dry by the receding tide. It was candidly recognized by Navy planners that enemy troops might cross a few hundred yards of mud and try to swarm upon the decks. No cutlasses were provided, but the destroyer crews were issued rifles and tommy guns, just in case.

After the seizure of Wolmi-do, dependence was to be placed on naval gunfire and naval air strikes to beat down enemy opposition before the afternoon landings on the Inchon beaches. Carrier air support was planned until Kimpo Airfield could be seized, at the earliest possible moment, so that planes of Marine Air Wing 1 could support the advance on Seoul.

Calculated audacity was also the spirit of the detailed planning by the 1st Mar Div. Only two regiments were available for the assault, and in 90 minutes of fading daylight they must gain a foothold in an Oriental city as populous as Omaha. The solution adopted was to land one regiment in the most thickly populated area, about a thousand yards from two commanding heights. The other regiment was to land toward the base of the Inchon peninsula and swing around in the rear of the city to bar escape of defenders or arrival of reinforcements.

The problem of high priority supplies and equipment was urgent, since the landing force could hardly wait until the high tide of the following morning. This led to



the bold plan of beaching LSTs for that purpose only 30 minutes after H-hour. These unwieldy vessels, of course, would be sitting ducks for enemy fire if the landing troops met with reverses. But that risk was considered preferable to delay.

COMNAVFE VAdm Charles T. Joy, through Commander JTF 7 (VAdm Arthur D. Struble, Commander 7th Fleet) commanded all forces engaged in the amphibious operations until command of operations ashore was passed to Gen Almond, CG X Corps. Control of landing force troops passed from Commander Attack Force (RAdm James H. Doyle, ComPhiGruOne) to Commander Landing Force (CG 1stMarDiv) after the securing of beachheads and notification from MajGen O. P. Smith that he was ready to assume the command. Command of X Corps troops passed to CG X Corps from Commander JTF 7 after the Corps landed and Gen Almond assured Adm Struble of his readiness to assume command.

When directed by Commander JTF 7, the Attack Force was to be dissolved. Adm Doyle would then be Commander Naval Support Force, to operate directly under COMNAVFE.

Much of this plan depended upon closely coordinated air support, to be provided by the Air Support Group of the Attack Force—two Marine squadrons based on the two CVEs of CARDIV-15, as well as Navy aircraft squadrons of a fast carrier group and Tactical Air Command, X Corps. The latter was a provisional Marine organization consisting of a headquarters and Marine Air Group 33 (Reinf), directly under command of CG X Corps for the purpose of providing tactical air support to X Corps. BrigGen Thomas J. Cushman was designated tactical air commander of X Corps under Gen Almond. Command and ground echelons of MAG-33 were to embark with JTF-7 aircraft echelons based in Japan and to be flown into Kimpo Airfield after that objective had been seized and declared operational.

Carrier based squadrons had the duty of providing close and deep air support during the amphibious phase under Attack Force control. Close air support control passed to CG X Corps after he assumed control ashore and when his TAC was prepared to exercise control. Air Force planes would operate in the objective area only when requested by Commander JTF 7 or CG X Corps after he exercised control of air operations.

The main elements of X Corps were the 1st Mar Div (Reinf), the U. S. Army 7th Inf Div (Reinf), X Corps Tactical Air Command, the 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team (under operational control of Far Eastern Air Force during movement to objective area), a regiment of ROK Marines, and supporting troops.

There had been little time for training the initial landing force elements to reach Japan. The only rehearsals were those conducted by the 3rd Bn, 5th Marines, after it was designated to assault Wolmi-do. More training

would have been desirable, but the prize to be gained by reaching the objective area on 15 September outweighed the risks involved in slighting last-minute training.

When the 1st Marines arrived at Kobe, the enemy was launching his greatest offensive in the southeastern Korea with elements of 14 battered divisions. The 5th Marine was summoned for the third time in a month to counterattack alongside Army regiments, had a prominent part in de-



Marines use scaling ladders to storm ashore at Inchon

feating this attempt to break the Pusan Perimeter. Even while the issue hung in doubt, Eighth United States Army Korea (EUSAK) G-3 Plans Section was planning a general Eighth Army offensive to be mounted simultaneously with the Inchon landing for the purpose of destroying enemy forces south of the Inchon-Seoul-Utchin line. This offensive was scheduled for 16 September, following the Marines' Inchon landing and ROK Marines' amphibious raids elsewhere on both the East and West coasts. As a further diversion, the battleship *Missouri* was to shell East-coast areas, including the port and rail center of Samchok (Map 1).

For the reserve Leathernecks, so drastically uprooted from civil life within the recent weeks, the typhoon which welcomed the 1st Marines to Kobe on 3 September probably seemed only a breeze by comparison. Two ships were damaged, but the loss of 24 hours' working time was more to be deplored. Troops had arrived in mixed-type shipping which had to be unloaded by Japanese labor and combat-loaded into assault type shipping. The LST had to sail for Inchon by 10 September, and transported by the morning of the 12th.

These tight schedules were observed to the minute. The only serious disruption was caused by the belated arrival at Kobe of a ship loaded with 1,300 tons of am-

munition, with the result that the assault shipping sailed with only 20 per cent of desired ammunition quantity.

Another typhoon threatened from 12 to 14 September without materializing. All ships, including those transporting the brigade from Pusan, arrived at the rendezvous area prior to the scheduled departure of the task force.

While the troopships were making an uneventful voyage, naval gunfire support ships got in the first licks at Inchon. Preliminary bombardments were laid down on 13 and 14 September by two U. S. heavy cruisers, two British light cruisers, and six U. S. destroyers. The problem of enemy defenses on Wolmi-do was solved, according to plan, on D-day minus two when three destroyers anchored off the island at ranges more suited to throwing forward passes than five-inch shells.

As the tactical equivalent of running interference, this bombardment succeeded brilliantly in its purpose of taking out opposing tacklers. The batteries on Wolmi-do, goaded into replying, hit two of the destroyers. Enemy positions were spotted by hovering aircraft and naval guns silenced all hostile fire. The valiant "cans" were not seriously damaged, and their precautions to repel boarders proved unnecessary.

The next day VMF-214 and VMF-323 squadrons from

Ebb tide mud supports barges used for pier at Wolmi.



CVEs *Sicily* and *Badoeng Strait* flew air strikes against Wolmi-do defenses. These squadrons had conducted preliminary softening-up and interdiction operations from 6 to 10 September in the objective area. During this period some 5,000 sorties were flown by Air Force, Navy, and Marine planes in an effort to paralyze enemy communications.

The CVEs withdrew to Sasebo for replenishment and

returned to the Inchon area in time to join Navy aircraft of the fast carriers for operations on 14 September. Simultaneously, the destroyers treated the harbor area to a second day of close-range bombardments which met with no response from the shore batteries.

Gen MacArthur had asked Gen Shepherd and his party to accompany him on the *Mount McKinley*. So rapidly had the Inchon operation burgeoned from an idea into a fact that some of the final arrangements for the landings were completed that last night on board the flagship.

D-Day (15 September 1950) dawned with overcast skies and the threat of rain squalls. While the cruisers and destroyers pounded Wolmi-do, three LSMRs contributed an intense rocket fire. At L-hour, 0630, the 3rd Bn, 5th Marines, supported by tanks, hit Green Beach with G and H companies in assault and I in reserve. No enemy fire was received from enemy beach positions. Although a NK battalion estimated at 400 to 500 troops occupied Wolmi-do, the Leathernecks moved so fast that they met only light and scattered resistance from small, disorganized groups armed with rifle grenades and automatic weapons. These forces were rapidly overrun by assault troops who swept on to seize the high ground<sup>3</sup> in the center of the island. An estimated 180 enemy were killed and 136 captured at a cost of 17 wounded Marines. Sowolmi-do Island, connected to Wolmi-do by a causeway, was seized at 1115 by a reinforced squad of G Company supported by a section of tanks. An enemy platoon was destroyed in this action.

Following the seizure of the harbor islands, a patrol could discover no mines along the 1,000-foot concrete causeway from Wolmi-do to Inchon. As planned earlier, preparations were then made to support the advance of Detachment A, 1st Tank Bn, across the causeway on order of CO 5th Marines.

Up to this point the intelligence promise of light resistance had been upheld by results. After the securing of Wolmi-do, however, came the critical lull when the tide fell to leave a vast mud flat between the island and mainland. Even though the enemy might have no more than the estimated maximum of 2,500 troops in the Inchon area, this lull gave his opportunity to rush reinforcements from Kimpo Airfield or even Seoul. To defeat such efforts, Marine and Navy fliers delivered strikes on NK communications within a 25-mile zone around the seaport.

Another devastating naval and air bombardment preceded H-hour at 1730. The two cruisers and five destroyers giving direct support were anchored as closely as possible to shore as the LSTs, LCVPs, and other landing craft churned the water toward the beaches. Enemy resistance at this stage consisted only of sporadic and ineffectual mortar fire directed at the smaller support ships.

<sup>3</sup>They broke an American flag over that hill, which Gen MacArthur took as his signal to leave the bridge of the *Mount McKinley* and go below for coffee.



Some confusion was caused among the landing craft by tidal currents as well as low visibility resulting from rain squalls, smoke from burning buildings, and approaching nightfall. The waterfront area presented an ominous spectacle as flashes and explosions stabbed the premature dusk. This inferno, fortunately, was more deadly in appearance than reality. For only scattered automatic and mortar fire met the Leathernecks of RCT 1 and RCT 5 when the first waves, landing on schedule, hit Blue and Red beaches respectively.

Preparatory bombardments had done such effective work that NK defensive efforts were dislocated when not paralyzed. On both beaches the seawall proved to be more of an obstacle than the enemy. Not enough scaling ladders could be provided, and delays occurred while some of the Marines scrambled over with the aid of the available equipment. Others made their way through holes blasted by naval gunfire.

After the first troops hit the beaches, following waves had trouble with intermingling of units when currents and low visibility prevented coxswains from landing in assigned areas. Confusion and delays resulted on both beaches, but the leadership of company and noncommissioned officers soon restored order.

The narrow confines of Red Beach, only about 650 yards in width, made it necessary for RCT 5 to land with two battalions abreast, each in column of companies. The initial objective line (O-A line), about 1,000 yards inland, included the two commanding heights known as Cemetery and Observatory Hills.

Only an hour and a half of daylight remained for the Leathernecks to fight their way through the devious streets and alleys of this Oriental city. But the assault echelons of RCT 5 let no grass grow under their feet. So swift was their advance that A Company reached the top of Cemetery Hill while an LST was still firing on that position. It was no time to go by the book, and the two battalions of RCT 5 forged ahead through the early darkness toward Observatory Hill. The enemy was more conservative, and resistance which had been light ceased altogether at nightfall. The Marines were well briefed as to streets and houses, so that most of the 1st Bn reached the top of Observatory Hill at 2000 and tied in later with the 2nd Bn on their right. Patrols sent forward about 500 yards from the O-A line encountered no resistance.

Meanwhile RCT 1, after landing south of the causeway, pushed inland through a sparsely settled factory district to seize the high ground of O-1 on the southern outskirts of the city. The first assault waves encountered such desultory small arms fire on Blue Beach that the 2nd Bn had only a single casualty. Here the confusion among following waves led to more serious delays than on Red Beach, but the first troops got off to a flying start. The terrain of this bottomland area consisted of rice paddies

as well as warehouses and factories. It was good defensive country, but only a few enemy riflemen disputed an advance which continued after darkness without much regard to flanks. The various battalion objectives along the high ground of O-1 were reached from 2000 to 2200 by troops who dug in for a quiet night.

The daring plan to support the two assault regiments with high priority supplies paid off richly when eight LSTs were beached abreast on Red Beach at H plus 30 without encountering trouble. Cargoes consisted of 100 tons of block cargo, 50 tons of ammunition, 30 tons of rations, 15 tons of water, and five tons of fuel, accompanied by elements of the 2nd Engineer Brigade and their bulldozers. This was the solution to problems of immediate supply until the morning high tide would allow larger quantities to be unloaded with less danger of enemy

**Marine flamethrower operator burns out enemy positions after the assault on Wolmi Island, the gateway to Inchon**



interference.

Batteries of the 11th Marines began landing on Green Beach at 1845, and by 2150 the 1st and 2nd Bns were occupying positions on Wolmi-do. Owing to the light resistance in Inchon and the smoke overhanging the city little firing was done that night. On D-day plus one these two battalions landed in Inchon, followed by the remainder of the regiment.

About a third of the city had been secured the first day, and both infantry regiments were in good positions to jump off the next morning. Nor had the cost been excessive, for the landing which might have been another Tarawa had resulted in total D-day casualties of 17 killed, two missing, and 165 wounded.

The accuracy of intelligence as to enemy strength was remarkable. After the event it was estimated that the



Marine patrols thread their way among destroyed buildings on Wolmi after the assault by 3d Bn, 5th Marines.

main NK elements at Wolmi-do and Inchon consisted of about 2,000 men—at least two battalions of the 226th Independent Marine Regiment, supported by companies of the 918th Artillery Regiment and small service units. These troops were for the most part of low quality, consisting of recent recruits with little training.

At 0630 on D plus 1 the two Marine regiments resumed their assault to seize the rest of Inchon and other division objectives. RCT 5 jumped off from the O-A line in a column of battalions, moving through the main east-west streets with the 2nd Bn leading the 1st Bn by 1,000 yards. The 3rd Bn, which had crossed over the causeway from Wolmi-do the night before, was in reserve.

From the O-1 line the 1st Marines began an advance which would take it about 7,000 yards to seal off the Inchon peninsula at its narrowest point. The companies

proceeded in platoon columns through hill and paddy country without meeting any effective resistance. One of the largest enemy groups encountered was a platoon of 25 men which a lieutenant surrendered to two squads of G Company after nine of his men were killed in a brief fire fight.

Contact between the two Marine regiments was made at 1000, and at 1335 a coordinated assault was launched to secure the beachhead line. Mopping up of by-passed pockets of enemy resistance in the city was left to the ROK Marines. These recent recruits went about the work with such trigger-happy enthusiasm that the streets were unsafe for all other Koreans, of whatever political persuasion.

The only threat of serious opposition on D plus one came when aerial observers spotted six enemy tanks waddling into the 1st Marine zone. Marine Corsairs pounced on them, and within a few minutes only heaps of crumpled and blazing wreckage remained.

Aside from this ill-timed venture, the quality of NK resistance may be measured by total Marine casualties for the second day, four killed and 21 wounded. The enemy, on the other hand, had suffered an estimated 1,350 casualties and the loss of about 300 prisoners during the first two days.

Logistical problems came much nearer to solution when 17 out of 23 LSTs were successfully beached on the morning high tide to be unloaded by the 1st Shore Party Bn and attached elements of the 2nd Engineer Brigade. General unloading began late that afternoon, when it was concluded that the tidal basin could be made operable without major repairs.

At 1730, just 24 hours after hitting the beaches, the landing phase of the Inchon-Seoul operation ended when Gen Smith established his CP on the outskirts of Inchon, near the secured Force Beachhead Line. First reports from the Pusan Perimeter indicated that the follow-up offensive of the Eighth Army had also got off to a good start. Gains were made all along the front, and the 2nd Div hurled the enemy back across the river in the Naktong Bulge sector.

But there was no time for the Leathernecks at Inchon to dwell upon preliminary successes. The task of the 1st MarDiv had only begun as the assault troops advanced several miles beyond the city on the evening of 16 September, taking positions astride the railroad in readiness to jump off to the eastward the following morning. No other combat elements of X Corps had landed as yet, and it was up to the two<sup>4</sup> Marine regiments to seize Kimpo Airfield, cross the river Han, and advance on Seoul.

US & MC

<sup>4</sup>Seventh Regiment would not reach Inchon until D-day plus 7.

Next month: *The Assault on Seoul.*



# THE CAPTURE OF SEOUL

## Battle of the Barricades

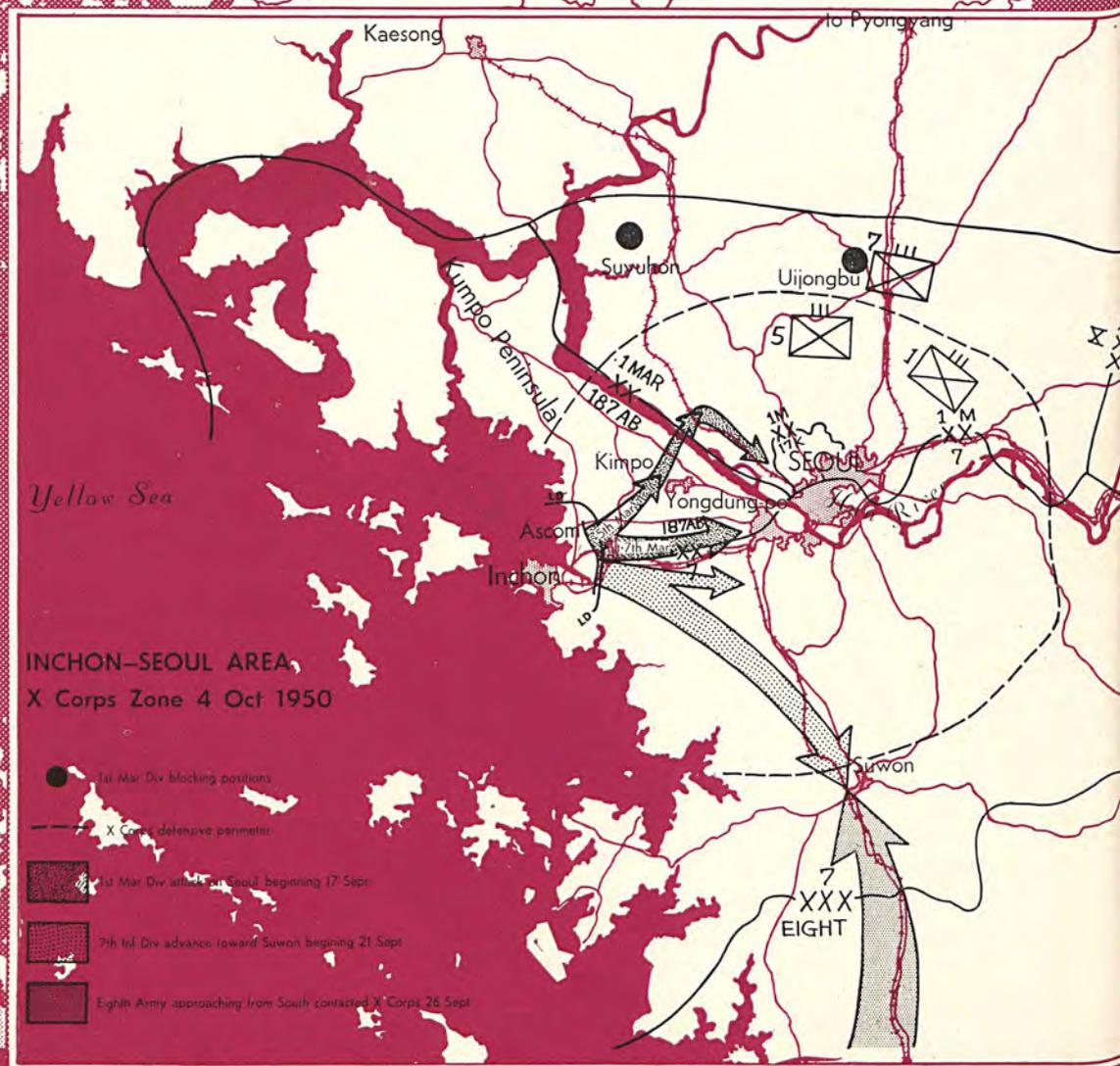
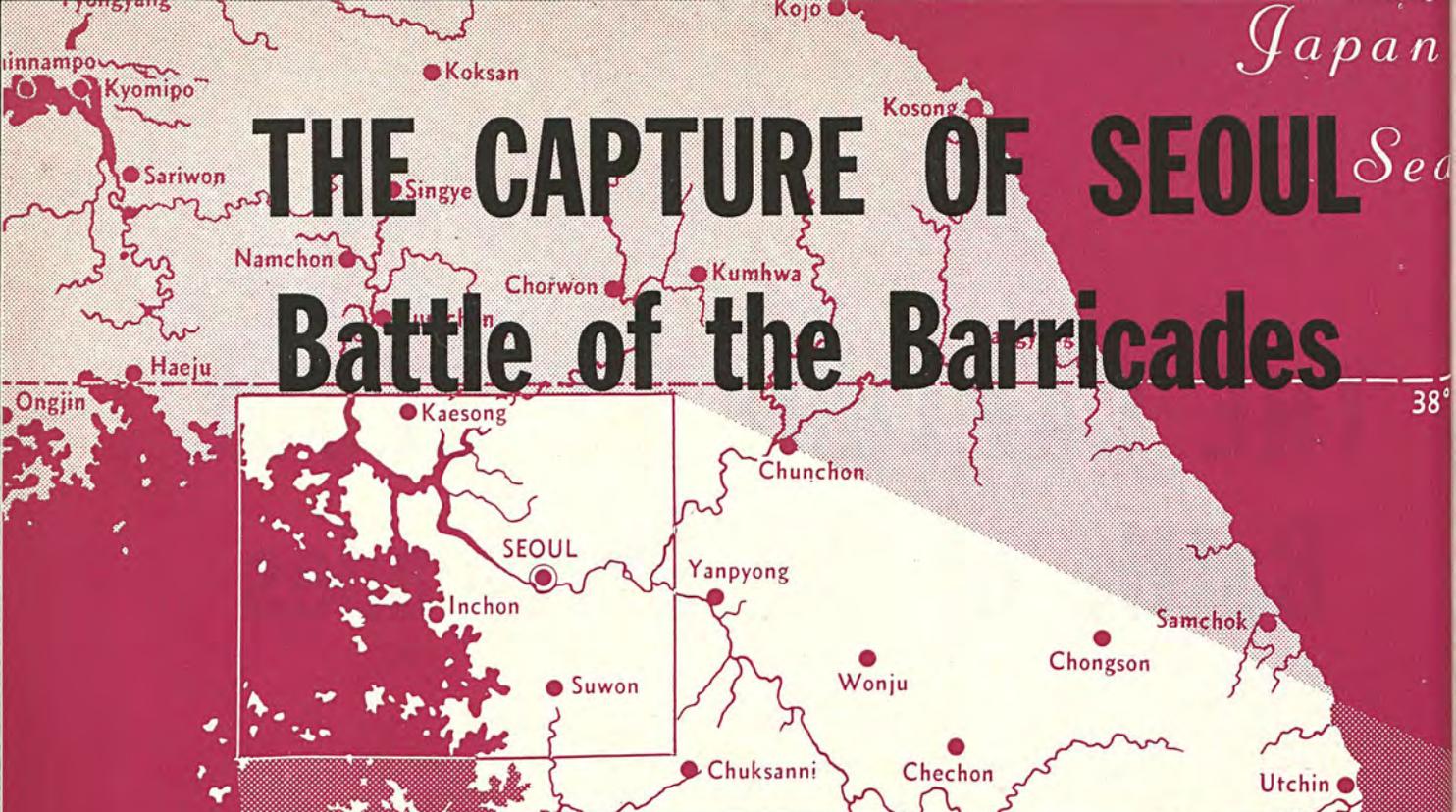
*By Lynn Montross*

Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps



# THE CAPTURE OF SEOUL

## Battle of the Barricades



INCHON-SEOUL AREA,  
X Corps Zone 4 Oct 1950

-  1st Mar Div blocking positions
-  X Corps defensive perimeter
-  1st Mar Div attack on Seoul beginning 17 Sept
-  7th Inf advance toward Suwon beginning 21 Sept
-  Eighth Army approaching from South contacted X Corps 26 Sept

Yellow  
Sea

IT HAD BEEN A BUSY WEEK-END FOR THE LEATHER-necks of the 1st Marine Division, especially the hundreds of reservists who were civilians only two months before. Friday, 15 September 1950, was D-Day for the division as the X Corps landing force at Inchon. By Saturday afternoon, 24 hours after hitting the beaches, the two assault regiments and supporting troops had secured this west coast Korean seaport of 250,000 inhabitants. And at dawn on Sunday the 1st and 5th Marines were three miles east of the city, ready to jump off in an advance on Kimpo Airfield and Seoul (Map, P 26).

If there had been time for any Monday morning quarterbacking, it might have been concluded that boldness, both of planning and execution, deserved much of the credit for this rapid progress.<sup>1</sup> Further risks were assumed on D plus two by X Corps and 1st Mar Div planners who realized that a 22-mile advance to Seoul by the two assault regiments was an invitation to flank attack. They concluded, however, that this risk was preferable to the greater risk of allowing the enemy enough time to reinforce the city from his main army in the south and make it a major center of resistance. For the Inchon-Seoul operation was only one phase of a general offensive mounted by all the United Nations forces in the peninsula. While the X Corps struck at Seoul, the hub of enemy communications, the Eighth U. S. Army began an attack on 16 September against the 14 enemy divisions which had held the initiative along the Pusan Perimeter in Southeast Korea. The object of the coordinated offensive was nothing less than the destruction of the North Korean Army, and the value of Seoul as an objective was summed up by Gen Douglas MacArthur, supreme commander, in a press statement:

"The history of war proves that nine times out of ten an army has been destroyed because its supply lines have been cut off. That's what we're trying to do. Everything the enemy shoots, and all the additional replenishment he needs, have to come through Seoul. We are going to try to seize that distributing area."

Several intermediate objectives had to be taken, however, before an assault could be mounted by two infantry regiments against a city of a million and a half inhabitants. Kimpo Airfield and the large industrial suburb of Yongdungpo lay between Inchon and the ancient capital, and afterwards the broad tidal river Han had to be crossed (Map, P 26). Since these subsidiary objectives were located on separate routes, the 1st Mar Div plan of maneuver called for a divergent advance of the two regiments into position for a final converging attack on Seoul. Regimental Combat Team 5 was to seize

<sup>1</sup>The landing at Inchon was the subject of an article in the July issue of the GAZETTE.

By Lynn Montross

In cooperation with the Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, the GAZETTE herewith presents another in a series of official accounts dealing with Marine operations in Korea. Prepared by writers and researchers of the Historical Division, these articles are based on available records and reports from units in Korea. Also to be treated in this series:

Mobilization and Movement to Korea  
The Chosin Reservoir Breakout  
Anti-Guerrilla Operations in South Korea  
The Drive to the 38th Parallel

Publication is scheduled for consecutive monthly issues, except for mobilization, which will not appear in order.

Admittedly it is too soon to write a definitive history of Marine fighting in Korea. Not only are enemy sources lacking, but even Marine and Army records are still incomplete. Articles of the length to be used in the GAZETTE, moreover, do not allow space for more than an outline of operations which will ultimately be given the detailed treatment of a monograph.

But timeliness is also an end to be sought, and these preliminary narratives are based on Marine and Army reports received up to this time. These articles are presented in the hope that GAZETTE readers will feel free to add to the incomplete record. This is an invitation, therefore, for you to supplement the existing record. Send your comments and criticisms, as well as any other information you can make available, to the Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, Washington 25, D. C.

the airfield, then continue to the occupation of the left bank of the Han in preparation for a crossing. The route of RCT-1 led along the Inchon-Seoul highway toward Yongdungpo, and the troops were to seize high ground to the west in preparation for an assault. These were the objectives of Corps Phase Line C-C, placing the two regiments in position for the converging movement on the final objective.

During the advance each regiment was to have responsibility for the protection of the division flank in its zone. This problem was to be solved in part by striking before the enemy had time to recover from his initial shock and reorganize for a strong resistance. As a further solution, dependence was to be placed on naval gunfire, artillery fires, and air strikes for the protection of flanks.

The planners, in short, trusted in boldness to cancel many of the risks when the two regiments jumped off at 0700 on D plus two.

It was in the same spirit that Cpl Okey J. Douglas, of D Co, RTC-5, did the planning for his bazooka team on that Sunday morning. The problem, as six T-34 tanks approached at dawn, was the supposed impossibility of knocking them out with a 2.36-inch rocket launcher. The solution, as grasped by Cpl Douglas, was to hit the enemy armor at a range suggesting boxing gloves rather than bazookas. Thus as the North Korean machines clanked around a bend in the road, Cpl Douglas held both his breath and his fire.

This was the best organized North Korean counter-attack since the landings, for about 200 Infantry as





accompanied the tanks. Unfortunately for the enemy, the 2d Bn had been smarting for revenge ever since its narrow escape from an ambush in August during the operations of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade.<sup>2</sup> Now it was the enemy's turn as the hostile tanks shouldered their way through the dawn toward the jump-off positions of the Marines.

When the counterattack was spotted, the 2d Bn already occupied defensive positions in depth which the commanding officer had selected as ideal for an ambush. The forward platoon of D Co, dug in on a height, was instructed to lay low until the enemy passed. The other two platoons were posted in waiting on opposite sides of the road, while the armor of Co A, 1st Tank Bn remained in the rear to deliver the knockout punch.

Fire was to be opened by all weapons after the Marine tanks set the example. Thus the six T-34's and accompanying infantry were trapped beyond hope of escape when the Leathernecks cut loose with everything they had. Cpl Douglas hit the first enemy tank in the right front bogie at a range of 75 yards. As it spun off the road in flames, his next 2.36 rocket struck the second tank at the base of the turret. Clouds of smoke poured from the cripple, which was speedily finished off along with the four others by friendly tanks, 3.5-inch rockets, and 75mm recoilless fire. Meanwhile the enemy infantry detachment was completely wiped out by automatic fire poured in from surrounding heights.

☛ IT IS NOT OFTEN that a Leatherneck is decorated for skepticism as well as bravery. But Cpl Douglas was recommended for a Bronze Star because of "great courage," and the citation added that he "performed these actions in spite of intelligence that this type of tank could not be destroyed with his weapon."

The fight had barely ended when Gen Douglas MacArthur and staff, accompanied by LtGen Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., commanding general of FMFPAC, arrived on the scene. It was the initial trip of shore inspection for officers who had made their headquarters on the USS *Mount McKinley* during the landings. As General MacArthur gazed in approval at the road strewn with burning tanks and enemy dead, an accompanying staff officer broke the silence of the group:

"You damn Marines," he remarked, "stage everything

to your own advantage—even a visit by the Supreme Commander!"

Field reports observed dryly that the enemy counterattack delayed the jump-off of the 5th Marines by 45 minutes. Before 0800, however, both regiments were on their way (Map, P 30).

The value of Kimpo as a first objective was obvious. Air support during the landings had been limited to carrier-based Navy and Marine planes, but seizure of the field would enable land-based Marine aircraft to take part in the attack on Seoul. Time was of the essence on 17 September, since Division G-2 reported Kimpo to be weakly defended. The 5th Marines raced ahead, therefore, to take the field before enemy reinforcements could be sent from Seoul.

The advance was made in column of battalions, the 2d leading the 1st, and the 3d in reserve. Minor pockets of resistance encountered in the village of Taejang-ni were quickly eliminated by patrol action. In the middle of the afternoon the 2d Bn swung to the left for the attack on Kimpo, while the 1st Bn drove on toward the river.

☛ THE AIRFIELD WAS OCCUPIED by 2/5 at 2020 and the troops dug in for the night. No opposition worth mentioning developed until 0100 the following morning. Then a platoon of E Co, holding advanced positions, beat off five counterattacks by about 50 enemy before rejoining the main body. The enemy made his chief effort in estimated company strength at 0500, only to be repulsed with heavy losses by E Co, supported by fire from other elements of the battalion. All three companies spent the rest of the day at mopping up resistance in nearby villages, and D Company with a platoon of tanks occupied a position overlooking the Han in preparation for a crossing. Meanwhile the 1st Bn closed the gap between regiments by moving to a position about two miles northwest of Yongdungpo, where it was relieved next morning by the 1st Bn of the 1st Marines.

The advantages of an early seizure of Kimpo were soon made apparent. Advance echelons of Marine Air Group 33 flew in from Japan on 18 September, followed next day by VMF-212 and VMF(N)-542 from Japan. By the 20th the first strikes were being launched by land-based Corsairs, and VMF-312 arrived from Japan on the 24th.

While RCT-5 was meeting scattered opposition on the way to Phase Line C-C, the enemy gave RCT-1 several

LEFT: Marine scout reconnoiters compound for signs of possible enemy activity. CENTER: Marine engineers complete bridge as their wounded buddies begin to roll back from the fighting lines. RIGHT: Marine tanks blast paths through enemy strong points on the outskirts of Seoul so that Leatherneck infantrymen can continue their advance

<sup>2</sup>The story of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade in the Pusan Perimeter operations was told in the June issue of the GAZETTE.

hot fire fights along the Inchon-Seoul highway. Heavy automatic and small arms fire was encountered about three miles west of Sosa from enemy groups dug in on heights commanding the road (Map, P 30). In order to speed the advance, the infantry of G Co mounted the tanks of B Co, 1st Tank Bn, as the spearhead for the 1st and 2d Bns abreast. The 3d Bn, as a mobile reserve, followed in DUKWs to exploit any successes.

Continued enemy resistance soon compelled the G Co troops to dismount and call for artillery and air strikes before the infantry could dislodge the enemy. After a hard day of slugging, all elements dug in for the night about 1,500 yards west of Sosa.

At 0642, after a quiet night with occasional mortar fire, RCT-1 jumped off toward the day's objective, Hill 123, about a mile east of Sosa. Two hours later the 3d Bn leading the 2d and 1st in column, passed through the burning town, set afire by shells of the 2d Bn, 11th Marines. Before noon the advance troops seized the height against moderate opposition and began organization of the ground in coordination with the other two battalions.

Enemy resistance increased with each mile gained along the Inchon-Seoul highway. At 1400 the troops holding Hill 123 were being pounded by mortar and artillery fire from the right flank, resulting in heavy casualties. Some of the camouflaged enemy positions could not be located for air and artillery strikes, and the firing continued throughout the day and night.

On the morning of 19 September the 1st Marines fought their way forward to designated positions two miles west of Yongdungpo, so that both regiments had now secured the objectives of Corps Phase Line C-C. If the division flanks had seemed unprotected during the two-pronged advance, the enemy learned better, to his cost, on D plus two when the 5th Marines called for naval gunfire to break up hostile concentrations on their left. The 1st Marines made extensive use of artillery and tactical air on their right for a similar purpose.

The same precision was evident in the logistical sphere. So rapidly had the Inchon tidal basin been made operative that cargo sufficient for six days of supply for the men already landed had been put ashore by the 1st Shore

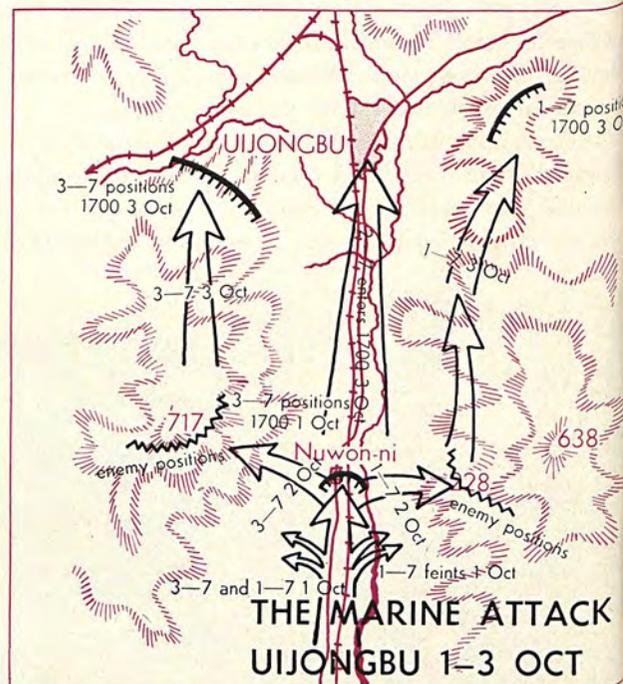
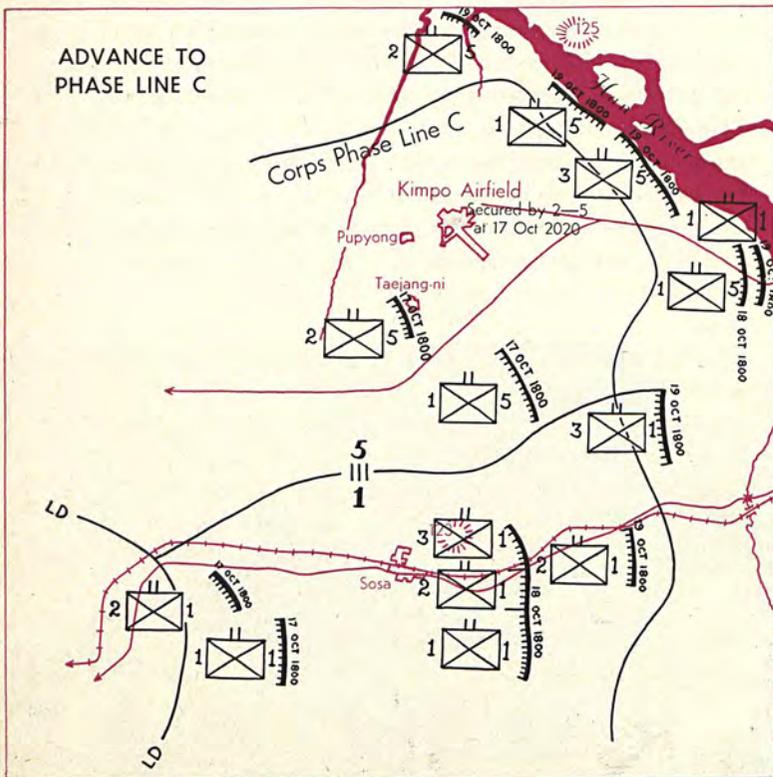
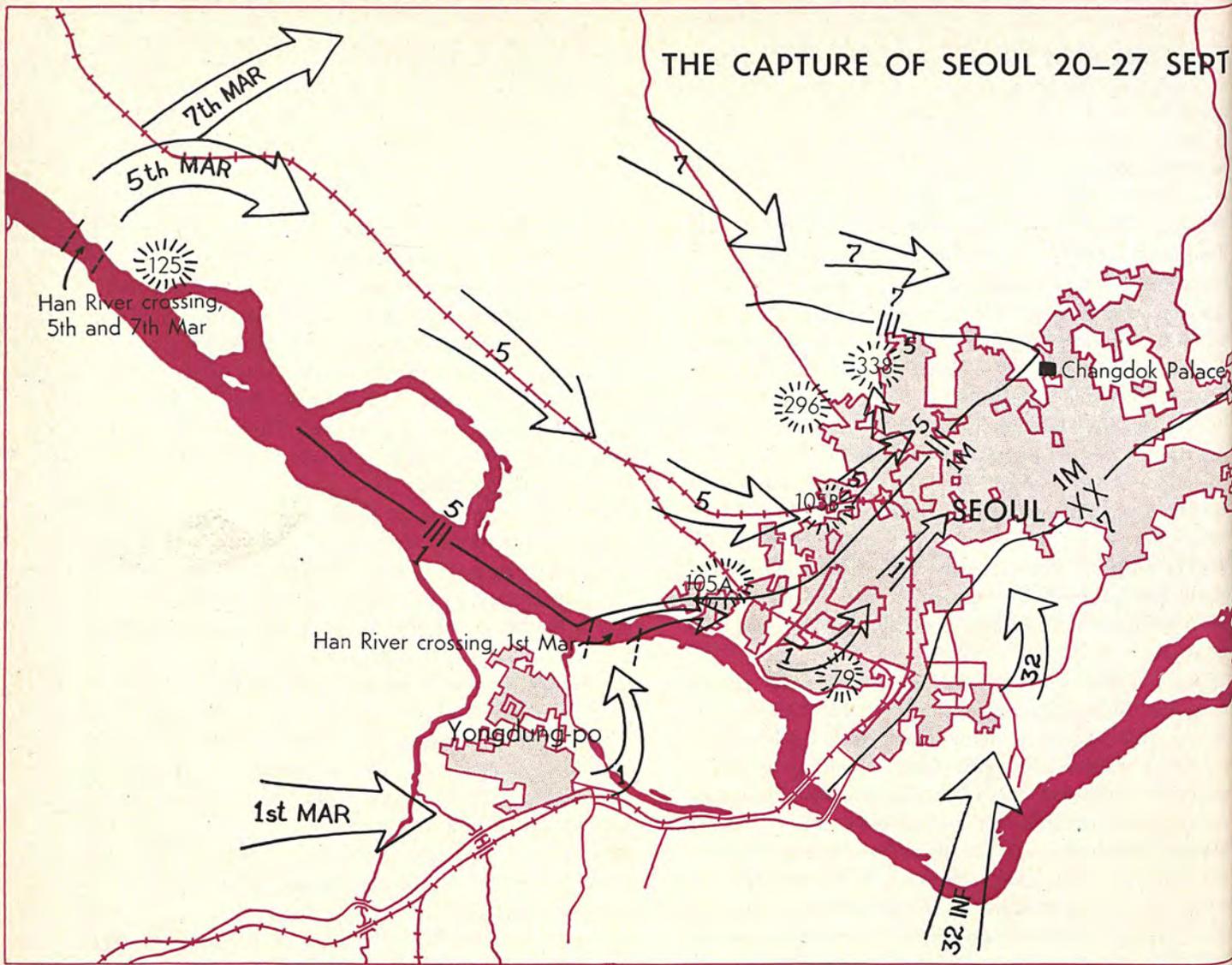
Party Bn and attached elements of the 2d Special Engineer Brigade. In spite of a shortage of transport vehicles, supplies and ammunition kept up so well with the rapid advance that the flow was never seriously interrupted.

On 19 September the two assault regiments were in position to take off from Phase Line C-C for their next missions—the crossing of the Han for the 5th Marines, and the attack on Yongdungpo for the 1st Marines. The two regiments were no longer alone, for two new outfits had been attached on either flank—a Korean Marine regiment (less one battalion left behind to mop up Inchon) on the left of the 5th Marines, and the newly landed 32d Regiment of the U. S. Army 7th Inf Div on the right of the 1st Marines. These recent arrivals were placed under operational control of MajGen Oliver P. Smith, CG, 1st Mar Div.

Intelligence reports of North Korean strength, which had been remarkably accurate so far, indicated that the enemy was recovering from his first shock and summoning reinforcements from outlying posts and stations in North Korea for the defense of Yongdungpo and Seoul. Elements of the NK 18th Division and a regiment of the 9th Division were resisting the 1st Marines, and the 25th Brigade had dug in along ridges northwest of Seoul within striking distance of a river crossing by the 5th Marines. Altogether, it was estimated that as many as 20,000 troops might be available for the defense of the ancient capital and its approaches. And though most of them were recent recruits of little training, PW interrogations revealed a discipline of terror imposed by fanatical officers.

Planning of the Han crossing was assigned by corps to division, which in turn left the details up to the 5th Marines. The regimental CP attracted so many ranking officers and news writers on the night of 19 September that CO 5th Marines finally had to invite them to leave—an invitation accepted with sympathetic understanding. Plans, as finally agreed upon, contemplated a reconnaissance that night by troops of the Division Reconnaissance Co, to be followed by the crossing of a covering force in rubber boats. Then the 3d Bn was to cross at daylight in LVTs and secure the right bank for the other two battalions.





Some very complex amphibian vehicles had been perfected for Marine landings, but in the early darkness of D plus four the planners placed their trust in warfare's oldest amphibian unit—a man swimming under cover of night to an unknown shore. Fourteen members of Recon Co crossed the quarter-mile tidal river, using a slow breast-stroke to avoid ripples.<sup>3</sup> Their caution seemed needless when no hostile troops were discovered, and the signal was given for the remainder of the company to follow in LVTs. Unhappily, the noise of the engines warned the enemy, and the LVTs were forced to turn back by mortar and machine gun fire. An hour later the swimming patrol returned with three wounded men who managed to reach the regimental CP by their own efforts.

The enemy was estimated at battalion strength by the patrol, so that new plans had to be made immediately for an assault landing. At 0645, in accordance with the hastily revised schedule, the 3d Bn crossed in LVTs, following an artillery preparation. Small arms and automatic fire came from Hill 125, across the river to the right, which was taken at 0850 after some brilliant infantry maneuvers. The assault troops of two companies swung about like a whiplash to surprise the position from the rear, while the third company pushed inland about 1,500 yards, still in LVTs, to secure the high ground covering the Seoul-Kaesong road. Then the 2d Bn crossed to pass through the third before wheeling right and advancing down the road toward Seoul. The entire operation was completed at 1500 on 20 September when the 1st Bn crossed in reserve and went into an assembly area.

ON THE FOLLOWING DAY the 7th Marines landed at Inchon. Not even activated until 17 August, the third infantry regiment of the 1st Mar Div could not arrive until D plus six. It was to have the unique experience of assembling for the first time in the objective area and training as a unit in actual combat. On 21 September, a few hours after landing, the 3d Bn moved to a position east of Kimpo with a mission of providing security for the airfield, while the other two battalions went into an assembly area.

That same afternoon the dissolution of Joint Task Force 7 was announced. At 1700 control of all troops ashore passed to MajGen Edward S. Almond, CG X Corps, after he notified Commander JTF 7 of his readiness to assume command. The naval forces, however, remained in the Inchon area to support operations.

The end of the amphibious phase was no news to the

<sup>3</sup>One general officer with an observer mission and a strong sense of duty wanted to accompany this swimming party and form his conclusions at close range. Ranking officers had to fall back on their tactical authority to prevent the exposure of a general to capture by the enemy.

5th Marines, who had tangled with major opposition in the hills northwest of Seoul as they continued their advance. There the enemy had set up a chain of strongly-manned defensive positions based on three heights—Hill 105 at the southern end, another Hill 105 in the center,<sup>4</sup> and Hill 298 in the north. The regiment deployed the 3d and 1st Bns in assault against Hills 298 and 105A respectively. But after initial rapid progress along the approaches, both battalions were slowed up by a heavy concentration of small arms and automatic fire.

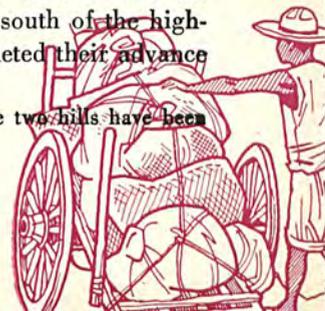
The attack was continued on the morning of 22 September with the Korean battalion in line between the 1st and 3d Bns of the RCT-5. A Co led an assault on Hill 105A, only to be pinned down by automatic and small arms fire from the front and left. C Co tackled the position from the right with no better success, and late that afternoon B Co was brought up for a concerted effort. Following an intensive air and artillery preparation, the 1st Bn attacked the hill from two sides and swept up to the top at 1745. Meanwhile the 3d Bn had met lighter resistance on Hill 298, and H Co took the position with relatively few losses.

These same two days were the occasion of a savage fight on the other side of the Han as the 1st Marines seized Yongdungpo. On the 19th and 20th the regiment had plugged slowly forward along the Inchon-Seoul highway against opposition which continued to increase. Observation from captured high ground made it evident that the enemy had concentrated in and about the industrial suburb for a strongly organized defense.

LAND MINES SLOWED UP THE ADVANCE, depriving the Marines of tank support for hours at a stretch until engineers could clear the road. Curious as it may seem, the enemy had made little use so far of a weapon so well suited to his delaying tactics. This deficiency adds to the evidence that shock and dislocation, resulting from the rapidity of Marine penetrations, had handicapped the defense more than lack of numbers and equipment. The enemy's potential strength, if well organized, is indicated by his losses of the first four days alone—1,023 prisoners, 24 tanks, and an estimated 2,750 casualties. Marine veterans of Pacific island campaigns could recall occasions when fewer Japanese, defending prepared positions, had sold every inch of ground dearly. But the North Korean forces were at last using tactics which might have profited them earlier, and the efforts of a reinforced company of Marine engineers were needed to clear the Inchon-Seoul highway of mines.

On 19 September the 32d Infantry relieved the 1st Marines of responsibility for the area south of the highway. Next day the Leathernecks completed their advance

<sup>4</sup>For purposes of ready identification, these two hills have been designated 105A and 105B on Map, P 30.



to the west bank of Kalchon Creek, on the western outskirts of Yongdungpo. The main assault was launched at 0630 on 21 September by all three battalions jumping off abreast from this position. The 1st and 2d Bns, on the left and right, encountered such deadly mortar and artillery fire that late in the afternoon the 2d had to be withdrawn, thinned by casualties. The break in the attack came when A Co swung around from the northwest to enter the town from the southwest. Maneuver and surprise turned the trick, and by nightfall these troops had advanced through the southern edge of Yongdungpo along a road leading to the airstrip east of town. There the Leathernecks dug in on both sides of the road to await the expected counterattack.

☛ IT HAD BEEN A LONG TIME since veterans of Pacific island campaigns had heard foemen screaming, "Ban-zai!" But once again that fanatical screech came out of the darkness as an estimated 500 North Koreans surged against the A Co positions. As a preliminary, four T-34 tanks moved up to a parallel secondary road, firing their 76mm guns and machine guns at point-blank ranges. A Marine 3.5 bazooka team disabled two of them, though they managed to creep away on their own power. Three North Korean infantry attacks followed in rapid succession, and each time the enemy was slaughtered. At daybreak some 275 corpses and about 50 automatic weapons were counted, though the A Co casualties had been light.

At daybreak a welcome anticlimax awaited the 1st Marines. The remaining elements of the regiment attacked at 0800, only to find the suburb evacuated by battered defenders who had retreated across the Han under cover of darkness.

With the capture of Yongdungpo, it was possible for the division to put into operation its plan for a two-regiment drive through Seoul. Although the original concept was modified by X Corps in an order directing the 32d Infantry to cross the Han and enter Seoul from the southeast, the main burden of capturing the city still fell upon the 1st and 5th Marines. The modified plan of 23 September called for the 5th Marines to continue their assault on the enemy positions on the western edge of the city while the 1st Marines crossed the Han on the right flank of the 5th, moved southeast along the river bank, then pivoted to the northeast and attacked through the heart of the city. Meanwhile two battalions of the 7th Marines were to advance across the northern edge of the city to prevent the enemy from escaping to the north.

☛ THESE MOVES WERE EXECUTED ON SCHEDULE. The 7th Marines (less the 3d Bn) moved into their assigned zone on the 23d. On the following day the 1st Marines, with the 2d Bn in assault, crossed the river in LVTs and DUKWs against sporadic mortar and automatic fire. The 2d Bn swung quickly over to the right flank

of the 5th Marines, and the 1st Bn passed through to seize Hill 79 at 1400.

In conjunction with the 1st Marines' crossing of the Han, the 5th Marines made a concerted effort to smash the system of defenses built about Hill 105B. Not only had the enemy been heavily reinforced in this area, but his tactics were formidable. Expert use was made of cover in reverse slope positions, and smoke pots did much to conceal Marine air and artillery targets. Supplementing the usual NK automatic and mortar fire, accurate artillery fire was laid down with a high proportion of white phosphorus.

Marine close air and artillery support continued to be excellent. Nevertheless, it remained for the infantry of the 5th Marines to close with an enemy making a last-ditch stand on ground of his choosing. Some intricate maneuvers were executed in preparation for the assault of 24 September. With the landing of the 1st Marines on the west bank of the Han, 1/5 was relieved on the right flank of the 5th Marines and shifted to the left flank to support the attack of 3/5. This move freed 3/5 to attack Hill 105B from the left while 2/5 made the main assault frontally. After a 40-minute air and artillery bombardment, 2/5 clawed its way forward a few hundred yards with heavy losses, but darkness found the enemy still holding a position honeycombed with caves and foxholes. The three battalions tied in for the night with orders to continue the assault in the morning.

On 25 September the Marines were operating for the first time on a division front, with RCT-1 on the right, RCT-5 in the center, and RCT-7 on the left. The 3d Bn of the latter had been returned to its control after being relieved on the Kumpo Peninsula by elements

Marine reinforcements cross Han to attack the enemy.





**LEFT:** Amphibian tractors, used for crossing the Han, spread out prior to embarking troops slated for the Seoul drive.

direction of attack 90 degrees to the left, so that the course of the regiment led directly through the heart of Seoul while RCT-5 drove through the northwest quarter. Stubborn resistance at a rail embankment held up the 1st Marines until noon, after mines prevented the tanks from coming to their support. Air and artillery finally dislodged the enemy, who continued the struggle by pouring in mortar and automatic fire from rooftops and road blocks. By evening the regiment had advanced 1,000 to 2,000 yards into the city,

of the 187th-RCT. This Army regiment was ordered by corps to clear the peninsula while relieving the 7th Marines of responsibility for covering the corps and division left flank, the Han crossing, and Kimpo Airfield. The 32d Inf was to advance on Seoul from the eastward, following its crossing of the Han, while other 7th Div elements were to patrol southward from Suwon, captured on the 21st.

while the 7th Marines on the northern flank had occupied all their objectives without meeting resistance.

The 7th Marines had the new mission of advancing across the northern edge of the city, cutting the Pyongyang-Seoul highway, and taking up a series of blocking positions to prevent the escape of the enemy from Seoul. Meanwhile the 1st and 5th Marines were to deliver their all-out attack on the city (Map, P 30).

If the weary Leathernecks had counted on any rest that night they were soon disillusioned. At 2040 a X Corps flash teletyped message reported the enemy to be fleeing Seoul and ordered an immediate pursuit by the 1st Mar Div. Division G-3 questioned the accuracy of intelligence based on night air identification and concluded that the fugitives were civilian refugees. Upon contacting G-3 of Corps, however, Division G-3 was informed that the Marine advance was to begin without delay. Gen Smith then called X Corps Chief of Staff and also received an affirmative answer. At 2205 General Smith gave the attack order to the commanding officers of the 1st and 5th Marines, directing them to concentrate along streets which could be identified at night. An hour later G-3 passed on the order to the commanding officers of the 7th and 11th Marines. By that time the 3d Bn of the 5th Marines had already received a counterattack which lasted all night.

The 5th Marines jumped off on the 25th with the 2d and 3d Bns in assault from right to left. Both were held up for hours by a heavy concentration of enemy mortar and automatic fire from Hill 105B. On the extreme left flank the 1st Bn was drawn into the fight along with the Recon Co and Korean Bn in an attempt to outflank the enemy. Not until 1545 was the hill finally taken after a costly frontal advance by the 2d Bn, supported by the flank attacks of the other units. The extent of enemy resistance is best described by the fact that some 1,750 enemy dead were counted on and about Hill 105B.

✿ FURTHER TESTIMONY that reports of an enemy flight were premature might have been given by Cpl Charles E. Collins of B Co, 1st Marines. Leading a patrol shortly after midnight to make contact with the 3d Bn, 5th Marines, he spaced his eight men about 10-feet apart in a little column fumbling its way up one side of the street. Suddenly the Leathernecks stumbled into enemy preparations for a large tank and infantry counterattack. All hell broke loose when the uninvited guests were identified. North Korean automatic weapons and tank guns

The 5th Marines, having cracked the enemy's main line of resistance, pushed on before dark into the northwest outskirts of Seoul. Meanwhile the assault by the 1st Marines began with the 3d Bn passing through the 2d to tie in with the 1st on the right. This shifted the





ABOVE: Marines of the 2d Platoon, G Co, 5th Marine Division clean snipers out of streets and dwellings of the residential section of Seoul during mop-up phase. LEFT: Other members of the platoon from G Co, 5th Marines file down shattered street in outskirts of Seoul, bound on sniper clean-up missions in drive to recapture the South Korean capital city.

blazed away indiscriminately, hitting nobody but making an infernal racket in the empty streets. Cpl Collins yelled for his men to get back to the CP as best they could and give warning. Meanwhile, he stuck it out under friendly as well as enemy fire until avenues of escape were closed. At 0500, with all other members of the

patrol safe, Collins had been given up for dead when he returned to the CP, wearing white Korean civilian garments he had found in a house which hid him from the enemy. This exploit was worth a Bronze Star and an extra stripe when reported to division headquarters.

By that time the 3d Bn had received his warning and repulsed the counterattack. The enemy was estimated at battalion strength with 12 tanks, five of which were knocked out by mines and 3.5 rockets. Intensive artil-

lery fires aided the Marines, and about 375 of the enemy were believed to have been killed.

Altogether, it was a night of confused alarms and excursions for both regiments in the dark city of seemingly empty streets. No contact could be made between regiments, so that a coordinated advance was out of the question when the Marines attacked at 0200 in accordance with X Corps orders. Little progress was made before dawn, and two more days of savage street fighting awaited the Leathernecks as they cut a wide swath straight through the city.

It would have encouraged them to know that at 2315 on 26 September elements of the 7th Div made contact with the 1st Cav Div of the U. S. Eighth Army about five miles south of Suwon. This meant that the Eighth Army had the enemy on the run after launching a coordinated offensive the day after the Inchon landing. With the main NK supply line cut at Seoul, enemy forces in the southern part of the peninsula were rapidly falling apart at the seams. In some sectors all organized resistance had ceased, and whole NK units were melting away as the troops buried their weapons and changed to civilian clothing.

The end of the Korean civil war was in sight, but there



was no rest for the Leathernecks making a battlefield of the ancient capital. Every street barricade was a new objective, for at intervals of 400 to 600-yards the enemy had built road blocks of sand bags, extending from one side to the other. Machine guns and antitank guns were concealed in adjacent buildings, and the approaches were sown with antitank mines.

The objective was all Seoul, and planning was left pretty much to the grimy and weary Leathernecks who fought it out from house to house, from barricade to barricade. One of these battles within a battle was waged by D Co of the 1st Marines to advance some 400 yards up a wide, tree-lined boulevard and take a sand-bagged road block. The men had just blasted their way through a similar barricade late on the morning of the 26th with air, artillery, and tank support.<sup>5</sup> And now the whole process had to be repeated while the casualties were being evacuated.

THIS FIGHT WAS TYPICAL of the others, whether they involved a battalion, a company, or a platoon. First the engineers probed ahead, hugging the sides of the street, to search for antitank mines. As the infantry waited, sounds of other fire fights could be heard all over a shattered city still filled with unseen civilians cowering in the wreckage. Then the earth seemed to buck as the engineers exploded enemy mines in strings of six. The tanks went into action, chopping at the new barricade with their 90mm guns. As they rumbled forward, taking plenty of enemy fire in return, the artillery laid down a barrage which sent up geysers of rubble. Three Corsairs snarled overhead, checking their positions before diving almost to the level of the roofs and hosing the barricade with streams of 50-caliber slugs. A few of the enemy made a run for it, but the BAR men cut them down before they rounded the corner.

Now the infantry moved forward single-file on both sides of the street at a crouching walk, their smudged faces wearing the curiously wooden expression of men in combat. A burning building made it so hot at the halfway point that the Leathernecks bunched up in their efforts to hasten past. "Spread out, you characters!", yelled a noncom. And already another cry could be heard, "Corpsman!"

Steel shutters were ripped from store fronts to serve as stretchers, and as the casualties went back the infantry went forward into the haze of smoke and dust. At 40 yards the BARmen and a 60mm squad cut loose, and the fire teams hugged the lee sides of the tanks as the first M-26 butted its way through all the artillery and Corsairs had left of the barricade—a low mound of burst sand bags and seeming heaps of rags which were actually enemy dead. Another objective had been taken, and the

<sup>5</sup>From an eye-witness description, "Street Fight in Seoul," by SSgt Robert W. Tallent in *Leatherneck* of January, 1951.

men of D Co rested a moment before plodding on toward the next road block.

Not all the combats were so grim. Elements of the 3d Bn, 1st Marines, approached a group of school buildings, surrounded by a stone wall, which should have made a perfect strong point. But patrols could find no signs of resistance, and the only occupants proved to be a group of terrified Korean civilians—the dean of a veterinary college, several of his professors, and their wives and children. Two elderly cows completed the list of captives.

Such interludes were all too rare, and during the three principal days of street fighting the Marines had casualties of 112 killed and 543 wounded. Nevertheless, the two regiments retained enough spirit to indulge in a friendly race of flag-raising. The 2d Bn of the 1st Marines and the 3d Bn of the 5th Marines, keeping up contact between regiments, reached Changdok palace in a dead heat at 1500 on 27 September. The men of RTC-5 were first to tear down the enemy flag and fly the Stars and Stripes. Half an hour later, however, the 1st Marines were officially credited with the first flag-raising, which took place at the former residence of the U. S. Ambassador.

The sharp decrease in resistance on 28 September was indicated by casualties which dropped to 12 killed and 28 wounded. The following day the 1st Marines were given the delicate task of guarding the streets as Gen MacArthur turned the city over to President Syngman Rhee of the Republic of Korea. While the ROK troops marched in the parade, the 1st Marines patrolled behind the scenes to prevent any such disrespectful noises as exploding enemy grenades or mortar shells. Enough pockets of resistance remained so that the danger was real to the tired troops assigned as much as 4,000 yards frontage for the battalion. But the unseen Leathernecks did their work so well that not a shot was fired at the VIPs during the liberation ceremonies.

WHILE THE 1ST AND 5TH MARINES were battling their way through Seoul and the 32d Infantry reached the eastern outskirts, the 7th Marines took their assigned objectives north of Seoul against increasingly stiff resistance. With the fall of the city, X Corps exploited its possession of the key enemy communications center (Map, P 26). Enemy forces driven before the advancing Eighth Army were expected to try to escape into North Korea by passing through the Corps zone, either as organized units or as stragglers in civilian clothes seeking a sanctuary above the 38th parallel. In order to guard against these contingencies, X Corps set up defensive positions in a rough semi-circle, beginning at Inchon, passing through Suwon on the south, crossing the Han about 13 miles east of Seoul, then passing ten miles north of the city and back to the coast near Inchon. Along the main approaches to



the perimeter from the east and south, blocking positions were to be set up at distances of five to 10 miles from the main defensive line.

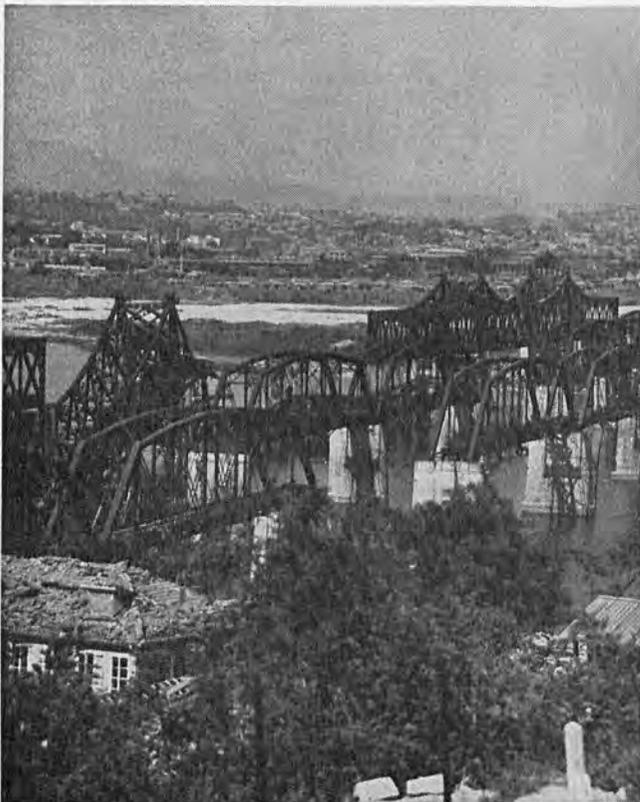
The Han river, flowing across the Corps area, formed a natural boundary between the 1st Mar Div in the north and the 7th Inf Div and 187th-RCT in the south. Within Seoul the 17th ROK Regt provided security.

In their own zone the Marines set up defensive positions. This task had been completed by 30 September, with the 1st Marines on the east, the 7th Marines in the center, and 5th Marines on the west. The following day these dispositions were amended when the 1st Marines extended their lines to the left to take over the positions of the 7th Marines, relieving these troops for a new mission to the northward.

One of the marvels of the Inchon-Seoul operation had been the performance of this regiment which received its unit training in combat. Partly by design as well as



**ABOVE:** Selfpropelled Russian type 76mm gun captured by Marines in Seoul. In the background is a Russian-made T-34 tank also deserted by the fleeing North Koreans. **LEFT:** Bridges that once spanned the Han River at Seoul stand as mute testimony to the accuracy of American bombers in their efforts to halt the flow of supplies to North Korean troops. **RIGHT:** Victorious Marines tie U. S. flag to halyard prior to raising it to signify the United Nations success in recapturing South Korea's capital city.



circumstance, these late arrivals had acquired experience by gradual stages, so that they were behaving like veterans in their fire fights north of Seoul while the other two regiments took the city. On 1 October the 7th Marines was given the task of advancing to Uijongbu to block the main artery leading to Pyongyang, the Red Korean capital. That same day the 3d Bn of the 5th Marines pushed forward to Suyuhon, taking that town against light opposition on 2 October to close off the other main route, leading to Kaesong. Meanwhile the 7th Marines, reinforced by a battalion of artillery, a company of engineers, and a tank company, moved out in column of battalions toward its objective.

Only road mines barred the way on 1 October until the 3d Bn, followed by the 1st and 2d, entered a defile leading to Uijongbu (Map, P 30). Here the column was stopped by an enemy rearguard estimated at 5,500, dug in along hills on either side of the road. The 1st Bn essayed a feint, simulating a flank attack, but heavy mortar and antitank fire compelled a return to the road. At the approach of darkness the Marines dug in for the night.

The next morning the regiment launched an attack on both sides of the defile with two battalions in assault.

the 3d on the left and the 1st on the right. Repeated air and artillery strikes failed to knock out strong positions in the 3d Battalion zone, and the tanks were stopped by mines. The total advance for the day was 300 yards, though the 1st Bn made progress against lighter resistance and seized its ridge line.

When the attack was continued on the morning of 3 October, the 3d Bn discovered that the enemy had withdrawn during the night, abandoning two mortars and a supply dump. The 2d Bn, which had been in reserve, swept forward with tanks to occupy Uijongbu that afternoon.

This was the last combat of the Inchon-Seoul operation, for only mopping-up took place during the remaining four days. The rapid progress made immediately after the landing has sometimes obscured the fact that the capture of Seoul was one of the toughest fights in Marine history. Casualties for the entire operation amounted to 417 killed or died of wounds, five missing, and 1,081

wounded, and more than two-thirds of this number were incurred in the prolonged battle for the city and its approaches. Losses inflicted on the enemy by the 1st Mar Div were estimated at a total of 4,792 prisoners and 13,666 casualties. Any veteran Leatherneck might have guessed that planning would begin for a new operation before the old one ended. On 1 October, in accordance with this Marine custom, a tentative order was published for advance planning of a lift by sea for a X Corps amphibious operation on the east coast of Korea. Further directives followed in quick succession during the next few days. And at 1200 on 7 October the division became non-operational, after being relieved by elements of the Eighth Army which were pursuing the enemy remnants across the 38th parallel. The Marines returned to Ascom City by convoy on that date, and only three days later they were boarding the troopships for their next adventure.

US & MC

*Next Month: Minute-men—1950 Model*



# **MINUTE MEN—1950 MODEL**

## **The Reserves in Action**

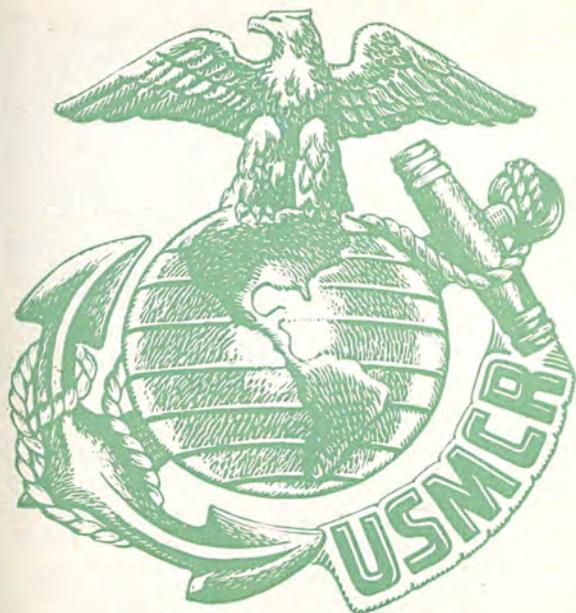
*By Capt Ernest H. Giusti*



# MINUTE MEN—1950 MODEL

## The Reserves in Action





In cooperation with the Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, the GAZETTE herewith presents another in a series of official accounts dealing with Marine operations in Korea. Prepared by writers and researchers of the Historical Division, these articles are based on available records and reports from units in Korea. Also to be treated in this series:

The Chosin Reservoir Breakout  
 Anti-Guerrilla Operations in South Korea  
 The Drive to the 38th Parallel

Publication is scheduled for consecutive monthly issues, except for mobilization, which will not appear in order.

Admittedly it is too soon to write a definitive history of Marine fighting in Korea. Not only are enemy sources lacking, but even Marine and Army records are still incomplete. Articles of the length to be used in the GAZETTE, moreover, do not allow space for more than an outline of operations which will ultimately be given the detailed treatment of a monograph.

But timeliness is also an end to be sought, and these preliminary narratives are based on Marine and Army reports received up to this time. These articles are presented in the hope that GAZETTE readers will feel free to add to the incomplete record. This is an invitation, therefore, for you to supplement the existing record. Send your comments and criticisms, as well as any other information you can make available, to the Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, Washington 25, D. C.

To this end the 1st Marine Provisional Brigade (Reinf) was activated at Camp Pendleton on 5 July, with the 5th Marines of the 1st Mar Div (Reinf) and MAG-33 of the 1st Mar Air Wing as the basic elements. Nine days later, the brigade, composed of well-trained aviation and ground regulars, weighed anchor for Kobe, Japan. But while still at sea, on 25 July, the brigade was diverted from Japan and ordered to land in Korea where reinforcements were urgently needed. The brigade arrived at Pusan on 2 August and was almost immediately committed to counterattack toward Chinju as part of Task Force Kean.



SHOWING AN AGGRESSOR'S DISDAIN FOR PEACE, THE North Korean Army that launched the lightning invasion of South Korea chose the quiet, last Sunday of June, 1950. With summer only four days old, that fateful Sunday found most Americans planning an outing; and like most Americans, many Marine reservists were contemplating the annual problem of whether to spend the summer holidays at the seashore or at the lakeside or in the mountains.

But on that peaceful Sunday, Communist aggression set the mills of the war gods grinding in the far off and little known land of Korea, and for thousands of Marine reservists the problem was solved. Though they did not know it then, the only seashore they were to know that year was to be shell-spattered, Inchon beach; the only lake, the frozen expanse of Chosin Reservoir; the only mountains, the deadly and rugged ridges along the route of the withdrawal to Hungnam.

Hardships imposed upon civilian Americans by the Korean conflict were indeed small as compared to the sacrifice which Marine reservists were called upon to make, for, separated from their families and work on short notice, Marine reservists soon found themselves training hard at Marine Corps camps, safeguarding American posts and stations at home and abroad, and fighting a cunning and cruel enemy in an inhospitable land. And the logical question is why?

By 2 July, the North Korean invasion had progressed to a point where the great disparity in the comparative strength made it obvious that additional American forces would be needed. And the choice logically fell on the Marines, as yet uncommitted in Korea.

By Capt Ernest H. Giusti

Regulars could help keep the determined enemy at bay, but they were too few in number to go over to the attack in force, and therein lies the story of the Reserve's contribution to the record of Marine forces in Korea. For the Reserve provided trained Marines in sufficient numbers and of such a caliber as to make the Inchon landing possible and victory probable.

But why the haste?

Aside from the international considerations, time and tide and the tactical situation prevailing in Korea during July conspired to give the build-up and transportation of a war-strength Marine division and a two-group Marine air wing an urgency unequalled since the first months of WW II.

By the fateful last week of July, it was apparent that the Korean "police action" had taken on the dress of a young but lusty war, entailing the employment of war strength divisions and all the techniques inherent in a war of fronts, including amphibious assault. Fortunately, Gen MacArthur had already planned an amphibious counterattack at Inchon, which, if successful, would relieve the Pusan perimeter, seize Seoul, and above all sever the North Korean Army's communications, thereby separating its heart from its body. In such an operation time is the "open sesame" to success, for tide conditions at Inchon are so unique that there is only one month of the year, September, when the landing of large bodies of troops can be executed satisfactorily. And during September itself, only the 15th through the 17th are really favorable.

IN ADDITION, an appreciable delay in the embarkation of the 1st Mar Div would probably have led to a postponement of the landing for at least a month. During that month the enemy would have had an opportunity to improve his defenses in the vicinity of Inchon, and improved defenses, if created, would have increased the cost in lives—always very important to Americans—and diminished the possibility of a successful assault. And so, the haste.

Granting the need for haste, the next question follows quite naturally; why were the reserves needed?

In general terms the answer can be given by simply stating that the Marine Corps' commitments had outrun its regular resources.

On 30 June, five days after the commencement of hostilities, the Marine Corps had 74,273 officers and men on active duty, and more than 40,000 of these were



Directors of the Marine Reserve during the present emergency. LEFT: LtGen Merwin H. Silverthorn, who held the office of Assistant Commandant concurrently. CENTER: MajGen Edward A. Craig, who commanded the 1st Marine Brigade, held the post until he retired recently.

RIGHT: BrigGen Harry B. Liversedge, present Director of the Division of Reserve, coordinator of the new program.

serving in the operating forces: those forces participating directly in the execution of the assigned missions and tasks of the Marine Corps. The operating forces were divided into the Fleet Marine Force, the security forces and Marines afloat.

The FMF was, in turn, divided into FMFPac and FMFLant, each possessing one peacetime division and one greatly understrength air wing. FMFPac had the 1st Mar Div (Reinf) and the 1st Mar Air Wing, while FMFLant had the 2d Mar Div (Reinf) and the 2d Mar Air Wing. And here it should be noted that had the 1st and 2d Divs been combined into a single unit, its numbers would still have fallen far short of a war-strength division.

Now, with the decision to employ a war-strength Marine division and a two-group Marine air wing in the Inchon-Seoul operation, previous commitments could be compromised, but not relinquished. To provide urgently needed regular Marines for the 1st Mar Div, security forces were drastically cut, 800 Marines were detached from shipboard duty in the Mediterranean and ordered to proceed to the Far East via the Suez Canal to join the division upon its arrival, and most of the effective combat strength of the 2d Mar Div was transferred to the 1st Mar Div. But despite these measures the 1st Mar Div could not have been brought up to war-strength had it not been for the availability of Marine reservists. The

only alternative to calling these reservists to active duty would have been "to send the 1st Division into combat so dangerously under-strength as to invite disaster."

However, the real measure of the reservist's contribution to the record of Marine forces in Korea may be gauged by citing just a few facts not commonly known. For example, at the time of the Inchon-Seoul operation there were more Marines in Korea than there had been in the total FMF two and a half months earlier, and 20 per cent of these were reservists, only six to eight weeks removed from normal civilian pursuits. By the end of March, 1951, approximately 38 per cent of the officers and 48 per cent of the enlisted personnel serving with Marine forces in Korea were reservists. And the United Nations force, which as early as November inflicted the first decisive defeat upon a Chinese Communist *division*, was a Marine *regiment* including approximately 34 per cent reservists.

But such achievements are not conceived one night and born the next morning. The real beginning of the Marine Reserve's contributions goes back to pre-Korean times. During the post-war years, the nation steadily decreased its regular Marine Corps, and in obviously perilous times placed a correspondingly heavier reliance on a strong and rapidly employable reserve as a complement to the regular Marine Corps. This reserve was established, and its mission—to provide trained personnel for integration into the Marine Corps in time of national emergency—was defined. And the advent of the Korean conflict found this organization ready in spirit, in numbers, and in quality.

By 30 June 1950, the Marine Corps Reserve had a total strength of approximately 128,000, almost double that of the regular Marine Corps. This was divided among the Organized Ground Reserve with 33,528 Marines in 138 separate functioning units, the Organized Aviation Reserve with a strength of 6,341 in 30 fighter squadrons (VMFs) and 12 ground control intercept

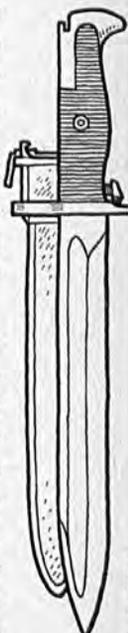
squadrons (GCISs), and the Volunteer Reserve with a strength of approximately 88,000. Of the overall group, a substantial majority were battle-tested veterans of World War II.

On 10 and 15 July, Gen MacArthur had urgently requested a war-strength Marine division with appropriate air for employment in Korea, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff asked the Commandant how much time the Marine Corps would require to create a third regimental combat team for the 1st Mar Div. The Commandant could only reply that the Marine Corps did not possess enough personnel to form an additional RCT without calling Marine reservists to active duty. This step was authorized by the President, with congressional sanction, on 19 July, and the die was cast!

At HEADQUARTERS MARINE CORPS the scene became one of feverish activity, with staffs burning midnight oil to insure the most orderly mobilization possible under the limitations imposed by time. Now, previously made plans began to pay off. Within a period of two hours, the mobilization team had gone into action, and four important preliminary steps had been taken. Reserve district directors were warned that the Organized Reserve would shortly be ordered to active duty. The Commanding General of MB, Camp Pendleton was told to expect approximately 21,000 organized reservists in the near future. The Commanding General of MB, Camp Lejeune was told to expect approximately 5,800. And the Commandant, with the Secretary of the Navy's approval, ordered that the practice of discharging Marine Corps personnel at their own request be discontinued.

Events now moved rapidly. On 20 July, 22 units with a total strength of 4,830 were ordered to extended active duty with a delay of ten days. During the next 15 days (21 July-4 August), the total Organized Ground Reserve was ordered to active duty on a schedule which took into account the state of readiness of the various units, their proximity to their initial station of deployment, and the facilities available to receive and care for them. In all, orders were issued to 138 units with a total strength of 1,880 officers and 31,648 enlisted Marines. By 11 September, in a period of 43 days, all of these units had reported for active duty, and this component had, *de facto*, ceased to exist.

However, even before the first reserve units arrived at their initial stations of deployment, four important events occurred. (1) On 25 July—a red letter day—the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed the Marine Corps to build the 1st Mar Div less one RCT, to war strength. And on the same day a 10-15 August date of departure for the Far East was set. (2) Also on 25 July, the Chief of Naval Operations authorized a 50 per cent reduction in Marine security forces within the continental limits of the United States, thus making additional regular Marines available



**MARINE CORPS RESERVE DISTRICTS**



District Director's Office

Composed of Caribbean Possessions with Headquarters at San Juan, Puerto Rico.  
Includes Alaska.  
Composed of the Territory of Hawaii with Headquarters at Pearl Harbor, T.H.  
Composed of the Canal Zone with Headquarters at Balboa, C.Z.



Leatherneck



Marine Reserves report for duty. LEFT: An officer of Washington's 5th Inf Bn bids his family goodbye. CENTER: Members of Philadelphia's 1st 155mm How Bn pass in review on activation day. RIGHT: The 5th Inf Bn marches to the station. NEXT PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM: They reported by train, bus, and plane. Volunteer Reserves on their way to Lejeune; Richmond's 105mm How Bn says farewell; and Peoria's men arrive for duty.

for the 1st Mar Div. (3) Two days later, Congress passed legislation authorizing the President to extend for one year all enlistments, regular and reserve, in the Armed Forces which were to expire prior to 9 July 1951, thus making it possible for the Marine Corps to rely on a stable body of regulars and reservists. (4) And on 31 July, even as the first reservists were arriving at Camp Pendleton and approximately 6,800 regular Marines of the 2d Mar Div were mounting out of Camp Lejeune to join the 1st Mar Div, the Joint Chiefs directed the Marine Corps to expand the 2d Mar Div to war strength and increase the number of Marine tactical squadrons.

The problem posed is at once apparent. Obviously, both divisions could not be built up simultaneously, and in view of the pending commitment of the 1st Mar Div, it was mandatory that this unit receive top priority. And it was in the buildup of the 1st Mar Div that the Marine reservists made their first important direct contribution.

On 31 July, the first Organized Ground Reserve units began to stream into Camp Pendleton. That day saw the arrival of the 13th Infantry Bn of Los Angeles, the 12th Amphibian Tractor Bn of San Francisco, the 12th Signal Co of Oakland, and the 3d Engineer Co of Phoenix.

The flow soon became a torrent, and within a week one would have been justified in terming the influx a flood. Also contributing was a steady stream of regulars: approximately 3,600 Marines from 105 posts and stations had poured into Camp Pendleton by 4 August. By 6 August, during one 96-hour period, approximately 6,800 Marines (from the 2d Mar Div) and 350 Navy arrived at Camp Pendleton. All the while reservists continued to report.

Fortunately, even before the arrival of the first reser-

vists, an extensive survey had been conducted of the facilities and supplies available at Camp Pendleton. On the basis of this survey, estimates had been made of the increased facilities and supplies which would be needed to support the vastly increased strength of the post. As rapidly as possible, measures were taken to expand facilities and augment supplies, with the result that all new arrivals were properly fed, housed, and clothed, even if many Marines had to be taken off one train and immediately set to helping prepare for the arrival of the next.

Headquarters Marine Corps planned the arrival dates on a staggered schedule to facilitate the reception and care of each arriving increment before the appearance of the next group. Even so, and despite the extensive planning and the 24-hour, seven-day week instituted at Camp Pendleton, the rate of daily arrivals taxed facilities to the limit, and over the limit, but an essential job had to be done and was being done.

As rapidly as reserve units arrived, they were billeted, processed, and classified. In the process, units were disbanded and the personnel utilized wherever the need was greatest. Every effort was made to assign reservists to tasks which would best realize their training and skills.

Those reserve Marines not assigned to the division rendered assistance in almost every function at Camp Pendleton. They served in the service and administrative organizations, in training with, and on the staff of the Training and Replacement Regt, and in working parties which assumed many of the mounting out responsibilities of the 1st Mar Div so that it might receive the maximum amount of training before shipping out for combat operations.

The assignment of newly mobilized reservists to a com-

bat unit in such a short space of time was contrary to both the desires of the Marine Corps and previously established plans which called for extensive periods of training. The decision was reached only after close consultation and much soul-searching among high-ranking Marine officers. But the harsh realities of a highly demanding war offered no choice, and the decision was made.

Basically, the problem was to select those reservists who, by virtue of previous training or military experience, were best qualified for inclusion in the 1st Mar Div. And it was in the vital interests of both the division and the individual reservists that the task be performed with

the minimum degree of error. An inadequately trained man is too often a liability in a combat situation, endangering his own life and those of his fellows, and lowering the combat efficiency of his unit.

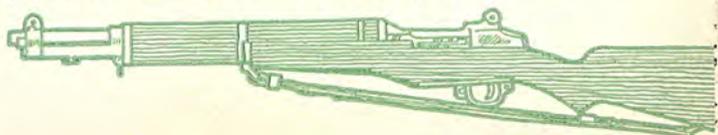
But since the urgency of the 1st Mar Div's departure did not permit the usual deliberative process of analyzing all training records, interviewing the men and their officers, and giving practical tests, criteria for the selection of reservists were established which would compromise a rapid selection, the means available, and the standards of selection with the task to be performed. Accordingly, two general categories were set up: Combat-Ready and Non-Combat Ready.

Combat-Ready was defined as applying to those reservists who had been members of the Organized Reserve for two years and had attended one summer camp and 72 drills or two summer camps and 32 drills, or who were veterans with more than 90-days service in the Marine Corps. Non-Combat Ready was applied to all reservists who did not meet these standards, and had a subdivision called Recruit Class which applied to all who had less than one year service in the Organized Reserve or had poor drill attendance records. The establishment of these standards was neither hasty nor lightly considered, but represented the collective professional judgment of some of the most experienced field commanders in the Marine Corps.

Even so, the Combat-Ready standard fell far short of representing an optimum Marine Corps goal for training; however, it could be said that these reservists, while certainly not as well trained as the Marine Corps would have liked them to be, nor as well trained as they would be if more time had been available, nevertheless had the training required for a combat assignment.

☛ SERVING to increase the problem of selecting Combat-Ready reservists was the fact that, while the majority of the reserve units reported with their records in excellent shape, many either became separated from their records in the hurried movement or were unable to complete them. By itself, this lack would not have resulted in a serious situation, but coupled with the narrow time limitations it created a problem which had unfortunate repercussions. For example, the margin of error in the selection of reservists for combat assignment was increased, MOSs were scrambled, and the payment of some personnel was delayed by as much as two months. In addition, the dearth of reliable records imposed a severe handicap upon the already strained administrative staffs of both Camp Pendleton and the 1st Mar Div at a time when efficiency and dispatch were at a premium.

To help overcome this lack, reservists were interviewed before the decision was made as to whether or not they were qualified for the Combat-Ready category. In these



interviews, reservists often manifested a strong desire to be classified as Combat-Ready, and this desire influenced many of them to present an overly optimistic picture of their previous training. However, a reservist's statement to the effect that he considered himself qualified for combat was not accepted as proof of his fitness, and his unit officers were questioned as to his qualifications. At the same time, any reservist who felt that he needed more training, and so suggested, was at once removed from further consideration for immediate assignment to combat duty with no prejudice.

Reservists falling into the Non-Combat Ready category, but not in the Recruit Class, were generally assigned to the Continental Security Forces in order to restore the 50 per cent reduction in those forces; to replace regulars in overseas security detachments on a man-for-man basis and thus make additional regulars available for combat; and to the Training and Replacement Regt where they could make up their training deficiencies and themselves become available for combat as replacements for the 1st Mar Div. Approximately 30 per cent fell in this category.

Reservists falling in the Recruit Class, approximately 18 to 20 per cent, were generally assigned to recruit training and some, temporarily, to administrative and service organizations.

APPROXIMATELY 50 PER CENT of the reservists, including all officers, fell into the Combat-Ready category, and 2,891 of these were assigned to the 1st Mar Div.

However, as the 1st Mar Div, less one RCT, approached war strength, it received instructions to activate the 7th Marines (Reinf), its third regimental combat team, and to embark the regiment not later than 1 September. And to make the achievement of this deadline possible, the Commandant ordered virtually all of the little remaining effective combat strength of the 2d Mar Div, the 6th Marines, at peace strength of less than two battalions, to Camp Pendleton for the purpose of serving as cadres in building up the new regiment. But of the total number of Marines involved in this transfer, approximately 50 per cent were Combat-Ready Reservists.

Meanwhile, the 1st Mar Div, while engaged in the process of mounting out, transferred approximately 300 of its men into the division's rear echelon to be utilized in the build-up of the 7th Marines. And to provide additional regular troops for this regiment, Marine Corps posts and stations and security forces within the continental limits of the United States again furnished increments. Just as rapidly as possible Non-Combat Ready reservists again stepped into the breach to relieve regulars at those establishments.

By so drawing Marines from widely scattered sources,



TOP TO BOTTOM: Marine Air Reserve Corsairs support landing operations of reservists training at Lejeune. Angeles' reserves learn to use the 40mm antiaircraft. Reserve Marines from Texas and Arizona practice amphibious landings. California reserves train in 60mm mortar training.

it was possible to activate the 7th Marines (Reinf) on 17 August. The units of the 6th Marines were redesignated, and as soon as personnel became available, new units were formed. However, once again Combat-Ready reservists were called upon to bring these units, on the eve of their departure for combat operations, to the strength commensurate with the missions for which they were designed. The reservists' contribution to the strength of the 7th Marines is graphically illustrated by the fact that the 1st Bn absorbed 805 reservists, and the 2d Bn 433, while Co I of the 3d Bn was composed almost entirely of reservists.<sup>1</sup> In all, there were 1,809 reservists in the regiment on the date of its departure.

Meanwhile, the 1st Mar Div, less the 7th Marines, sailed for the Far East. The first cargo vessels weighed anchor on 10 August, followed on 14 August by the first attack transport. Loading was completed on 21 August, and the last ship sailed on the 24th. And a week later, on 1 September, the 7th Marines (Reinf), less one infantry battalion, shipped out, close on the heels of its parent organization. In the period of one month approximately two-thirds of a war-strength Marine division had been built up from a 31 July strength of approximately 3,600 Marines, and was en route to the Far East. And in three more weeks a war-strength Marine division was smashing at the gates of Seoul.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, the buildup, transportation, and commitment of a war-strength Marine division was an accomplished fact, even if in retrospect this achievement still gives many responsible officers pause. But perhaps the pause would be of shorter duration if one salient feature of this achievement was noted and remembered. On 15 September, the day on which United Nation forces in Korea went over to the attack with a vengeance, Marines of the Organized Reserve constituted approximately 19 per cent of the 1st Mar Div's total strength.

## THE ORGANIZED AVIATION RESERVE AND THE 1ST MAR AIR WING

Men of the Marine division which stormed ashore at Inchon and moved toward Seoul had the comforting knowledge that they would be supported by their fellow Marines of the 1st Mar Air Wing, who in the post World War II years had made the development of close air support techniques and skills a must. Two carrier-based regular Marine VMF squadrons rendered excellent air support during the initial assault. A week later, while Kimpo airfield was still under intermittent enemy fire,

<sup>1</sup>However, upon the joining of 3/6, which became 3/7, the battalion was completely reorganized, and the reservists of Co I were distributed among all battalion units so that an approximately equal percentage of reservists to regulars would exist.

<sup>2</sup>The ground elements of the brigade joined the division and became the 5th Marines (Reinf).

three additional VMFs, newly arrived in the Far East, began operating from that field, adding their weight to the drive on Seoul.

What the reservists in the 1st Mar Div probably did not know, however, was that a large fraction of the newly arrived VMF's was composed of organized aviation reservists, who, like themselves, had been plucked but seven weeks earlier from the normal civilian pursuits of young Americans.

Once more, the Marine Reserve had played a vital role in a noteworthy achievement of the Marine Corps. During this seven week period, 937 aviation reservists had moved from civilian life in the United States to combat operations in Korea. And while this is by no means the end of the story of Marine aviation in the present emergency, neither is it the beginning, for the story goes at least as far back as the first days of the Korean conflict.

The outbreak of hostilities on 25 June, and the increased Marine Corps commitments which soon followed, found Marine aviation in an enviable position as compared with Marine ground forces. Since the initial demands upon the 30 VMFs and 12 GCISs of the Organized Aviation Reserve were comparatively small, the needs of Marine aviation were filled quickly and easily. And even when demands increased sharply, it never became necessary to drain completely the Organized Reserve aviation pool.

☛ THE FIRST DEMAND came on 23 July, when the personnel of three Reserve VMF and six GCI squadrons were ordered to active duty in order to provide trained Marines for the 1st Wing which had furnished the units and personnel of MAG-33. And of the total 1,474 reservists ordered to duty approximately 1,400 actually reported at MCAS, El Toro, on 1 August.

The arrival date of these personnel initiated a month of feverish but efficient activity at El Toro. In rapid succession, a new Tactical Air Control Squadron and a new GCIS were activated, orders were received to move the rear echelon of the 1st Wing to the Far East, and MAG-15, including VMF-212, was transferred from Cherry Point to El Toro.

In short order, the necessary unit transfers and personnel joinings were made and the authorized composition and strength of the 1st Mar Air Wing achieved. Units of the wing mounted out and sailed for the Far East on 17 and 24 August. And the remaining units of the wing, including an augmentation detail for MAG-33 containing 60 per cent reservists, sailed on 1 September. By 17 September, all these units had arrived at their destinations.

Their timely arrival more than doubled Marine aviation strength in the Far East, and the number of VMFs available for the Inchon-Seoul operation was increased from two and a half to six. Of the six VMFs, five par-



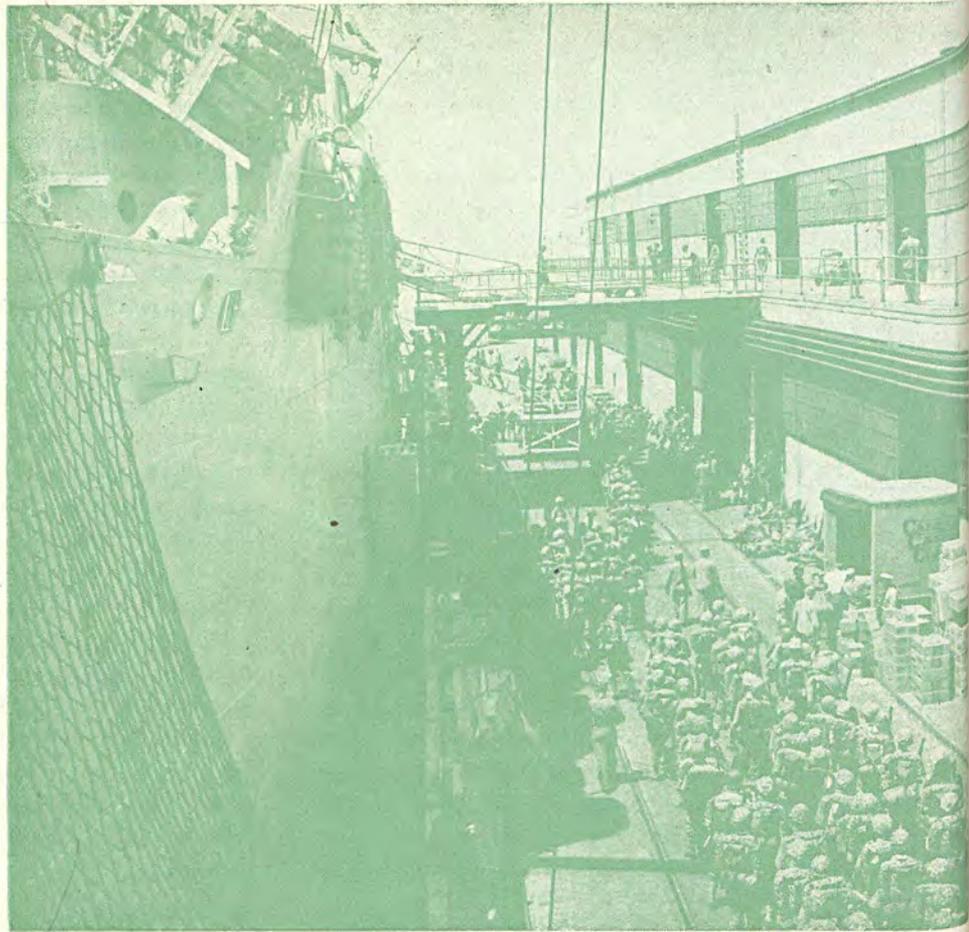
ticipated directly in the operation and rendered valuable air support to ground elements.

Following the outstanding success of the Inchon-Seoul operation, the remnants of the once confident and deadly North Korean Army fled in the direction of the Manchurian sanctuary, and the end of the Korean conflict seemed in sight. Therefore, during the fall of 1950 the need for Marine air and ground units diminished appreciably. However, toward the end of November, Chinese Communist forces streamed across the Manchurian border and entered the struggle in greatly superior numbers. As a result, the air and ground needs of the Marine Corps again swung upward. To bring Marine aviation into balance with its requirements, additional aviation units of the Organized Reserve were ordered to active duty whenever and wherever they were needed.

The circumstances surrounding this mobilization were almost ideal. Approximately 95 per cent of the officers were combat experienced in their then current billets. Of the enlisted, almost all staff non-commissioned officers were skilled technicians, and only approximately 10 per cent of the personnel in the lower ranks were in need of basic training. And since demands came gradually no difficulty was experienced in filling these promptly and with first-rate Marines. In fact, five VMFs were ordered to active duty as units preserving their squadron designations, and 27 units were mobilized as personnel.

By 1 March 1951, 20 of the 30 reserve fighter squadrons and all 12 of the reserve ground control intercept squadrons in existence on 30 June 1950 had been mobilized. Of the 6,341 Marines in the Organized Aviation Reserve, a total of 5,240 had been ordered to active duty, and, of these, the impressive number of 4,897, or approximately 93.4 per cent, had actually reported to their stations.

Impressive as these achievements may be, the real significance of the Aviation Reserve's contribution lies in



Regulars and reserves together, men of the 1st Mar Div wait, fully equipped, to board transports on the San Diego docks for their ultimate destination, the Inchon landing.

the fact that while the reservists serving in Korea represented approximately 25 per cent of the total strength of the 1st Wing by the end of September, the Aviation Reserve was ready to increase that number greatly with little or no loss in combat efficiency. Had it become necessary to do so, the number of aviation reservists in the Far East conceivably could have been increased by 400 or 500 per cent. Significantly, seven months later, 51.5 per cent of the officers and 36.5 per cent of the enlisted men in the 1st Wing were reservists. And even after having met all the demands of Marine aviation, there still remained ten well-trained fighter squadrons in the reserve pool. These might well be called the "mobile reserve" of Marine aviation, for their role in the operations of Marine air is analogous to the mobile reserve of ground forces.

#### MOBILIZATION OF THE VOLUNTEER RESERVE

On 30 June 1950, the Volunteer Reserve was, by far, the largest component of the Marine Corps Reserve. Although this branch was designed primarily for personnel

who desired affiliation with the Marine Corps but whose personal activities or location did not permit them to participate conveniently in the Organized Reserve program, the Marine Corps, nevertheless, considered the Volunteer Reserve an important source of trained manpower.

Therefore, when, in the first week of August, a review of Marine Corps assigned and projected commitments revealed that the number of immediately available members of the Organized Reserve was inadequate to meet demands, plans were initiated to tap the Volunteer Reserve. Five days later, on 5 August, the Commandant warned the Marine Corps Reserve Districts that approximately 60 per cent of this branch would shortly be called to active duty. And 10 days later, on 15 August, the first calls went out.

The Marine Corps' confidence that the Volunteer Reserve would not be found wanting in either numbers or quality is justified by the fact that six and a half months after the first of its members were ordered to active duty, there were approximately 68 per cent more Volunteer Reservists on active duty than there were Organized Reservists. And in October, 1950, a survey revealed that approximately 99 per cent of Volunteer Reserve officers and 77.5 per cent of enlisted were veterans of World War II.

Commencing on 31 August with 4,951, the strength of Volunteer Reservists on active duty rose to 50,950 by 28 February. In one peak month alone, October, 20,613, of whom 1,002 were newly enlisted, joined the regular establishment.

However, statistics alone do not tell the complete story. Since the service commitments of Volunteer Reservists in an inactive status are less than those of Or-

ganized Reservists, their civilian commitments and responsibilities are normally higher, and no statistical column can describe the attitude displayed by, and sacrifice often imposed upon, those ordered to active duty. It is an unqualified tribute to the Volunteer Reserve as a whole that better than 80 per cent of those ordered reported as directed.<sup>3</sup>

Their direct contribution to the Marine Corps' efforts in Korea was very material. Arriving too late to participate in the buildup of the 1st Mar Div and the 1st Mar Air Wing, they later made up the bulk of the replacement

<sup>3</sup>Of the 20 per cent non-available, 12-15 per cent were physically disqualified and the remainder were discharged because of hardship, delayed for their own or the government's convenience, etc.

drafts which joined these organizations overseas. Volunteer Reservists also filled out the strength of the forces providing security at vital posts, where their arrival made possible the release of regulars to the 1st Mar Div on a man-for-man basis. By 31 December, there were approximately 800 reservists in a total overseas security force of over 4,000.

On the domestic scene, members of the Volunteer Reserve fleshed out the skeletonized 2d Div, in which there were approximately 20,000 reservists (organized and volunteer) by 31 December 1950. In the domestic security force, volunteers made up a substantial part of the approximately 3,000 reservists who were taking up the slack left by the departure of the regulars. They also assumed important duties in the training and replacement commands, recruit training, maintenance, and a myriad of specialized tasks. And their availability helped to make it possible for the Marine Corps to be the first of the Armed Forces to initiate a rotation program for the benefit of personnel with the longest service in Korea.

## CONCLUSION

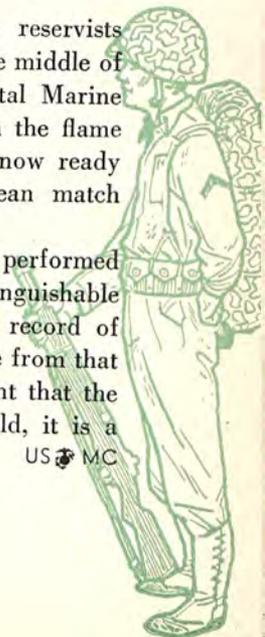
Rotation had its beginning on 5 March when 1,200 Marines arrived at San Francisco from Korea. And by the end of May, a total of about 6,000, including reservists, had been rotated.

By this time, regular resources had begun to catch up with commitments. And in the early part of June the Marine Corps began releasing reservists from active duty, the first of approximately 64,000 who, barring unforeseen circumstances, will have been released by June, 1952.

Thus, as the cycle of the active duty service of Marine reservists approaches its end, it is fitting that the Marine Corps acknowledge, and the nation recognize, the remarkable role which the Marine Reserve has played in preserving American security during the present emergency.

Coming from every state in the Union, reservists swelled the ranks in great numbers, until by the middle of April they comprised 45 per cent of the total Marine Corps strength. In Korea they helped contain the flame of war, and at home they prepared and are now ready for immediate employment should the Korean match touch off a general conflagration.

Wherever they served, Marine reservists performed their duties so well that they became indistinguishable from regulars. And in the last analysis, the record of the Marine Corps Reserve is almost inseparable from that of the regular establishment. But to the extent that the story of the Reserve can be set apart and told, it is a story which undeniably deserves telling.



# WONSAN TO THE RESERVOIR

## Red China Enters The Fight

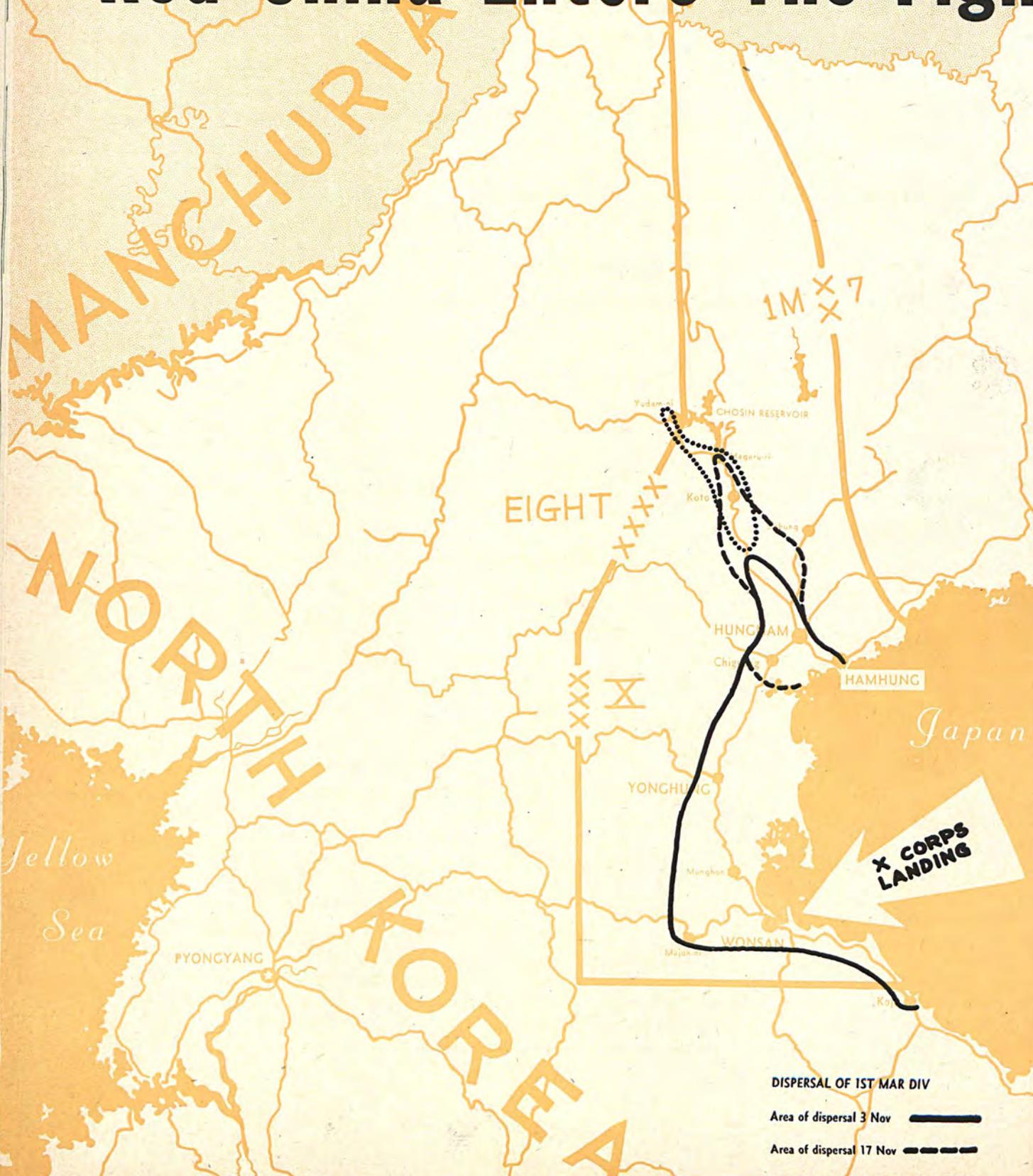
*By Lynn Montross*

Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps



# WONSAN TO THE RESERVOIR

## Red China Enters The Fight



DISPERSAL OF 1ST MAR DIV

Area of dispersal 3 Nov —————

Area of dispersal 17 Nov - - - - -

Area of dispersal 27 Nov .....

AT WONSAN THE LEATHERNECKS DID NOT FIND IT necessary to storm ashore and fight for the beaches. Not a shot was fired to oppose the landing of the 1st Mar Div from 25 to 27 October at the leading seaport of North-east Korea.

It was, in short, simply an administrative landing which grew out of the amphibious assault planned by X Corps before the end of the Inchon-Seoul operation.\* The troopships, after rounding the southern tip of Korea on their way from Inchon, were kept waiting for a week while the Navy cleared the mines left in the harbor by retreating North Korean forces. But the town itself had already been occupied without a struggle by ROK troops advancing up the east coast from southern Korea.

Among the 280 landings recorded in the 175-year history of the Marine Corps, there was never a tamer one. On 14 October the first elements of VMF-312 were flown to Wonsan from Japan to provide the rare spectacle of Marine airmen making themselves at home in the objective area before the appearance of the landing force. As the final anticlimax, the assault troops learned upon arrival that Bob Hope and Marilyn Maxwell had preceded them to put on a USO show.

Why had the amphibious operation been changed to an administrative landing after a series of seemingly confused plans and orders? This was the question which perplexed the men of the 1st Mar Div at the end of their tedious voyage. Yet the answers might have been found in the very extent of the victory which the Leathernecks themselves had recently helped to win. For the coordinated offensive launched on 15-16 September by all United Nations forces in the peninsula had nearly achieved its purpose of destroying the North Korean Army as a fighting force. While X Corps, with the 1st Mar Div as landing force, cut the main enemy line of communications at Inchon and Seoul, the Eighth U. S. Army drove westward and northward to rout the NK forces holding the initiative along the Pusan Perimeter. By the second week of October the enemy was too shattered to put up any organized resistance at Wonsan other than sowing the harbor with mines.

Before this result could be fully anticipated, X Corps alerted its units on 29 September—the date of the official liberation of Seoul—as to the possibility of an amphibious assault at Wonsan. Five days later a X Corps operational order directed the 1st Mar Div, then actively engaged north of Seoul, to serve as the landing force. Ships from the 7th Fleet, which had remained off Inchon after taking part in that amphibious assault, had

\*The story of Inchon-Seoul was told in the July and August issues of the GAZETTE.

By Lynn Montross

In cooperation with the Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, the GAZETTE herewith presents another in a series of official accounts dealing with Marine operations in Korea. Prepared by writers and researchers of the Historical Division, these articles are based on available records and reports from units in Korea. Also to be treated in this series:

The Hungnam Evacuation

Anti-Guerrilla Operations in South Korea

The Drive to the 38th Parallel

Publication is scheduled for consecutive monthly issues.

Admittedly it is too soon to write a definitive history of Marine fighting in Korea. Not only are enemy sources lacking, but even Marine and Army records are still incomplete. Articles of the length to be used in the GAZETTE, moreover, do not allow space for more than an outline of operations which will ultimately be given the detailed treatment of a monograph.

But timeliness is also an end to be sought, and these preliminary narratives are based on Marine and Army reports received up to this time. These articles are presented in the hope that GAZETTE readers will feel free to add to the incomplete record. This is an invitation, therefore, for you to supplement the existing record. Send your comments and criticisms, as well as any other information you can make available, to the Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, Washington 25, D. C.

previously been designated as Task Force 90 under the command of RAdm James H. Doyle.

The 1st Mar Div was withdrawn from the operation on 7 October and returned in convoy from blocking positions north of Seoul to the Inchon area. This was also the date of Corps and Division embarkation orders directing the loading of about 28,000 men and their equipment on 71 ships. Next day the Marines began the complicated task of combat-loading in the Inchon tidal basin. The great tidal range meant that ships entering at high water must be beached until the next favorable tide before departing. Troops were embarked with a view to expediency, and an ordeal of monotony awaited the men crowded into the LSTs. Time dragged especially for the 1st and 3d Bns of the 1st Marines, who boarded their LSTs on 10 October and spent five days at anchor off Inchon. The voyage around the peninsula took 11 more days, counting the interval of Navy mine-sweeping at Wonsan harbor while the troopships cruised back and forth offshore.

The original plan had called for an amphibious assault on 20 October by RCTs 1 and 7, with RCT 5 in reserve. After seizing a beachhead, the 1st Mar Div was to cover the landing of the 7th Inf Div of the U. S. Army. Meanwhile the two divisions of the I ROK Corps, recently attached to the Eighth Army, were to advance up the east coast toward the objective area.

Circumstances caused this plan to be abandoned before many elements of Task Force 90 left Inchon. North Korean resistance had folded so suddenly that Wonsan fell like a ripe plum to the fast-moving 3d Div of the I ROK Corps on 10 October. An amphibious assault being





The Marines never had a tamer landing. (Bob Hope even beat them to Wonsan.) The Navy's frogmen and minesweepers had a tough job, though, clearing the harbor of thousands of mines.

no longer necessary, X Corps planners decided upon the administrative landing. Afterwards the 1st Mar Div was to slice westward across the waistline of the peninsula—125 miles over difficult mountain roads—and link up with Eighth Army units for an attack on Pyongyang, the Red Korean capital.

Again the completeness of the UN victory confounded high-level planners when Eighth Army units took Pyongyang on 19 October during their sweep northward against scattered resistance. On the assumption that organized opposition had been crushed, the westward movement was cancelled on 22 October and X Corps assigned a zone of operations in Northeast Korea. The new overall plan of the supreme command called for UN forces to drive to the border of Manchuria. A three-pronged advance was envisioned by X Corps planners in their zone—the 1st Mar Div on the left, the 7th Inf Div in the center, I ROK Corps (3d and Capital Divs) on the right, and the 3d Inf Div in reserve.

On 26 October, while the Marines were landing, MajGen Edward M. Almond, CG X Corps, directed elements of the division to proceed from Wonsan by way of Hamhung to the Chosin and Fusen Reservoirs for an advance to the border. Other Marine elements were meanwhile to protect the Wonsan-Kojo-Majon-ni corridor until the 3d Inf Div landed.

The fulfillment of these missions would make it necessary for MajGen Oliver P. Smith, CG 1st Mar Div, to disperse his units over a vast area stretching 300 miles from Kojo in the south to the border. Even the imme-

diated objectives, Kojo and Hamhung, were 118 miles apart. The equation was complicated not only by the time and space factor, but also by the few supply routes available in rugged mountain country. Finally, the integrity of units was also to be considered, since a Marine division functioned at its best as a single integrated instrument (Map 1).

Altogether, it was a difficult problem in dispersal and concentration, and the solution was perhaps the most interesting feature of forthcoming operations.

Broad in scope as Marine assignments were, it was not expected by X Corps intelligence that much organized resistance would be encountered. A G-2 report of 21 October concluded that routed NK remnants planned either to withdraw from the Wonsan area to Manchuria, or to attempt a last stand in the mountains of northern Korea. It was admitted that the Chinese or Russians might intervene on behalf of beaten Korean Reds, but the report added that no evidence of any such development had been encountered.

Naturally the Marines landing at Wonsan found themselves plunged into an atmosphere of soaring optimism. "Home by Christmas!" was the wishful slogan of service troops after the recent news of the successful descent of Eighth Army paratroops north of Pyongyang to cut enemy routes of escape. "The war is very definitely coming to an end shortly," declared Gen Douglas MacArthur, supreme commander, who watched the operation from the air. "With the closing of that trap there should be an end to organized resistance."

It could hardly have been imagined by the Leathernecks on their first day ashore that some of them would be hard pressed in a hot fire fight within 36 hours. The 1st Marines lost no time at beginning its mission of protecting the Wonsan-Kojo-Majon-ni area. As the initial step, the 1st Bn, reinforced by 4.2 mortar and engineer platoons, landed at Wonsan about 0900 on 26 October and entrained at 1400 for Kojo, some 35 miles southward along the coast. These troops were assigned the duty of guarding a ROK supply dump after relieving a battalion of the 23d ROK Regt.

AS A DEPARTURE from the usual autumnal drizzle, was a bright blue and gold October day when the 1st Bn (less one platoon) crowded into gondola cars drawn by an asthmatic little engine: The war seemed far away, especially when the men noted that the enemy had neglected an obvious opportunity to blow up tunnels. Keeping with the holiday mood, Kojo proved to be the most attractive town the Marines had seen in Korea—an almost undamaged small seaport flanked by the white beaches and sparkling blue waters of the bay.

Upon arrival at 1600, it was learned that the supply dump no longer existed, having been moved by ROK forces. But there remained the tasks of relieving the

ROK battalion and protecting the Kojo area (Map 2). This coastal plain, consisting of wet rice paddies, was about 5,000 yards in diameter, surrounded by a semi-circle of hills forming a natural perimeter. High ground northwest of town was taken over from the ROK troops and occupied as the main battalion position by Charlie Co and two platoons of Able Co. The other Able platoon held Hill 117, just north of the town, while the two platoons of Baker Co moved out to two hills southwest of the seaport (Map 2).

This gave the battalion a thinly-held perimeter, but ROK officers reported only minor contacts with retreating Red Korean bands raiding the villages for rice and young women. The train which brought the Marines was to make a return trip next day, guarded by a platoon of Baker Co, with more ammunition and supplies. A motor convoy was also scheduled to arrive from Wonsan on the 27th to provide vehicles and added equipment.

Despite the tranquil situation, the Marines neglected no precautions, even to a withdrawal plan. Korean telephone communication linked the battalion to the regiment at Wonsan until radio contact was established next day, and a battery of artillery was scheduled to arrive at Kojo that night.

THE INFORMAL RELIEF of the ROK battalion took place after a quiet night, and these allies departed with their women and children in the train which had brought the Marines. Later in the afternoon the vehicle convoy arrived safely from Wonsan with added equipment and ammunition. Not until sunset was the brief illusion of peace shattered by long-range enemy automatic fire on a wire-laying jeep from the vicinity of Hill 185. Soon the outposts on Hills 185 and 109 were receiving automatic fire which increased in intensity after dark. Next came probing attacks in platoon strength, executed with a boldness and precision which indicated an organized enemy rather than guerrilla bands.

Just before midnight the CO of Baker Co asked permission to withdraw, after reporting his 3d Plat under attack from front and flank on Hill 185. Permission being granted by the battalion commander, all elements were gradually pulled in along the railway track. This movement was aided by the timely arrival of Fox Btry, 11th Marines. The gunners immediately set up their howitzers along the beach opposite the battalion CP and laid down interdicting fires in the zone of Baker Co, which had been stopped near the village of Chonchon-ni by heavy small arms and automatic fire from all sides. The battalion commander soon arranged for radio contact, so that CO Baker Co could direct 4.2 mortar as well as artillery fires.

At dawn, after a defensive halt of several hours, the company was ordered to continue its withdrawal toward the battalion position. A platoon of Able Co, sent out

from the battalion position, helped to carry the wounded through muddy rice paddies. During this movement an estimated 200 enemy moved westward from Kojo with a view to interception. These NK troops did not suspect that they were approaching the battalion position until Able and Charlie Cos opened up at long range with mortar and automatic fire. The enemy column was dispersed, about 75 being killed, and Baker Co completed its withdrawal.

Both Marine flanks had also been under heavy attack during the night. On the left the enemy infiltrated through Kojo in company strength to envelop the Able Co platoon on Hill 117, but the Leathernecks held their ground in a fire fight lasting an hour. On the right, a series of probing attacks by enemy squads led up to a coordinated assault by two companies on Charlie Co. Although some confusion resulted in the darkness, all positions were restored at daybreak with the aid of supporting mortar and artillery fires.

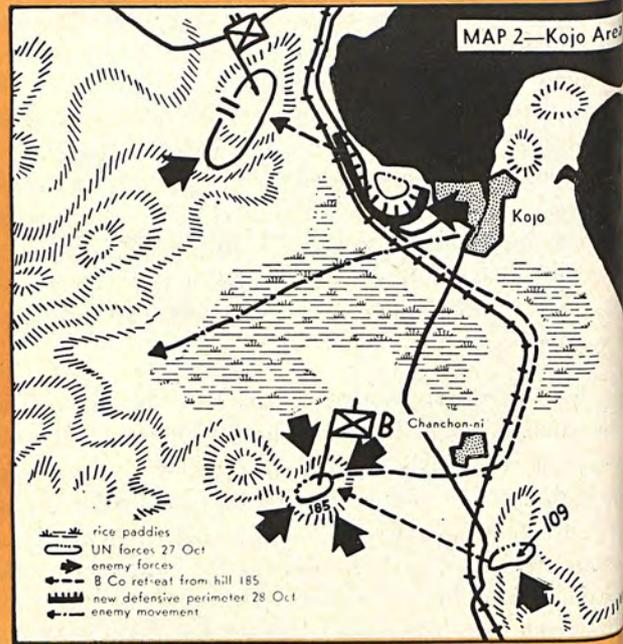
Since Kojo no longer contained military supplies, the CO of the battalion decided on a withdrawal to a tighter perimeter for all-around protection against superior enemy numbers. Hill 117 offered the best defensive position, and movement commenced about noon on 28 October under cover of air and artillery. Enemy forces immediately occupied the high ground of the former battalion position but were evicted by air strikes.

The three squadrons of MAG-12, one flown in from Kimpo and the other two from Japan, had begun operations from Wonsan airfield before the landing of the division. They were followed early in November by the arrival from Japan of the three squadrons of MAG-33, two of which operated from CVE carriers and one from Wonsan until the 12th, when they established their CP at Yonpo airfield.

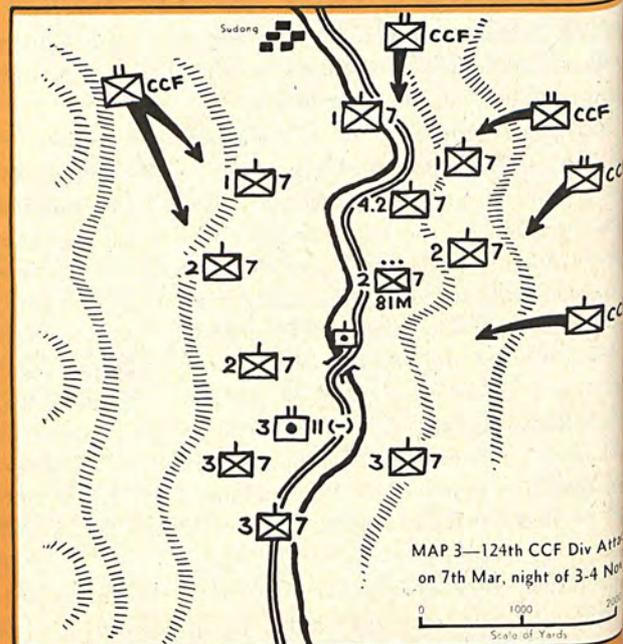
Excellent air support helped to keep the casualties of the 1st Bn down to 22 killed, 38 wounded, and eight missing in the Kojo fight as compared to an estimated 500 enemy casualties. PW interrogations revealed that the Marines had been attacked by three battalions of the 10th Regt of the 5th Div—one of the best units of the North Korean army at the outset of war. Total NK forces in the Kojo area, counting remnants of other units, were estimated at 4,000 to 7,000.

ON A BASIS OF RADIO REPORTS, the CO of the 1st Marines decided to send the 2d Bn from Wonsan as reinforcements. The 3d Bn, in accordance with Division orders, was assigned to blocking positions at Majon-ni, an important road junction about 28 miles west of Wonsan. Two trains brought the 2d Bn to Kojo at 2230 on the 28th, and these troops shared a 2,000-yard perimeter with the 1st Bn on Hill 117. Continuous mortar and artillery fires were placed on all known enemy positions throughout a night which passed uneventfully. Patrols





ABOVE AND BELOW: Patrols sent out the next morning reported no signs of enemy activity in Kojo village. The 1st Bn, 1st Marines had cut off the North Korean's main avenue of retreat—the Kojo-Wonsan roadnet.



sent out the next morning reported no signs of enemy activity, and it was concluded that large enemy forces had by-passed the Kojo area and continued their retreat along secondary routes into the hills to the northwest.

Helicopter reconnaissance on 29 October not only added confirmation but resulted in the picking up of four Marines, cut off from their units in the confusion of night fighting, who had been reported missing in action. The word "help," spelled out in rice straw on the ground, led to the rescue of a Baker Co survivor who had hidden for 40 hours in a strawstack.

On the 30th an LST reached Kojo Bay with two platoons of tanks from Co C, 1st Tank Bn. They were not landed, being no longer needed, and the LST returned to Wonsan the following day.

☛ THUS, THE ACTION at Kojo ended as unexpectedly as it began. On 1 November the 2d Bn assumed responsibility for security, and the 1st Bn returned to Wonsan on an LST which had brought a Korean Marine Corps company. Two days later the 2d Bn was relieved and moved back to Wonsan by convoy in accordance with Corps orders, leaving the quiet Kojo area to KMC troops. The two battalions of the 1st Marines were immediately assigned to blocking positions—the 1st in the Wonsan area, and the 2d along the Togwan-Majon-ni road.

The 3d Bn, reinforced by an artillery battery, had reached Majon-ni in convoy on 28 October to find the road junction a lucrative post for the bagging of prisoners. Retreating North Korean forces, denied the coastal route through Kojo and Wonsan, were now attempting to escape through the hills. Some of these fugitives, in fact, consisted of troops whose units were identified in the recent fight at Kojo.

About 600 captives were rounded up by patrols during the first week at Majon-ni. No enemy resistance developed until 2 November, but during the following week the main supply route to Wonsan was continually cut. Convoys were turned back on several occasions, and once an air drop of supplies was necessary. Most of the enemy attempts consisted of road blocks, either undefended or manned by concealed forces lying in wait for convoys. And though the resulting fire fights were on a small scale, a succession of NK efforts testified to the vulnerability of a single MSR in a mountain area of few and poor roads.

On 7 November the enemy became emboldened to the extent of attacking Majon-ni itself. The 3d Bn, warned by PW interrogations, was loaded for bear when a force of undetermined size assaulted the perimeter with grenades and burp guns. So one-sided was the ensuing contest that the enemy withdrew after losses of 53 killed and about 130 wounded at a cost to the Marines of three men wounded.

Nevertheless, the problem of supplying the 3d Bn be-

came so serious that X Corps ordered the 1st Marines to patrol the MSR. A company from each of the other two battalions, plus tanks and elements of the 1st Engineer Bn, managed to keep the road clear thereafter. At the finish a bag of 1,300 prisoners left no doubt as to the value of the occupation of Majon-ni. But Marine staff officers must have speculated as to what might happen if an entire division went out on a limb, as represented by a single MSR in mountain country.

On 14-16 November the 1st Marines was relieved in the southern sector by units of the 3d Inf Div, the leading elements of which had landed at Wonsan on 7 November (Map 1). Owing to lack of transportation, delays resulted after these troops and KMC reinforcements took over the positions of the 1st Marines at Majon-ni and the Wonsan area. Not until 19 November did the last elements of the regiment clear Wonsan by rail and motor for an assembly area in the vicinity of Chigyoung, about six miles southwest of Hamhung.

This was the first step in pulling together Marine units which at times had been proceeding in opposite directions to carry out their missions. Besides the widely separated northern and southern zones, the CG 1st Mar Div also had the responsibility for protecting intervening strategic points. Actually it was a task beyond the numerical strength of a division, and the solution might not have been possible except for Marine basic training. Along the MSR between Munchon and Wonsan, for instance, artillery not attached to regiments served very creditably as improvised infantry. Tankmen guarded the airfield at Yonpo, while shore party and amphtrac elements took on infantry duties in protecting the Wonsan airfield.

☛ UP TO THE MIDDLE of November, indeed, it might almost have been said that Gen Smith had two separate wars on his hands—a defensive war in the south against escaping NK remnants, and an offensive war in the north against Chinese Communist forces. Before the division finished unloading at Wonsan, the first CCF troops in the X Corps zone had already been encountered on 30 October northwest of Hamhung. Sixteen prisoners taken on that date by the 26th Regt of I ROK Corps were identified as belonging to the 124th CCF Div, and PW interrogations revealed that Chinese troops had crossed the Yalu as early as 18 October.

In order to carry out its mission to the border, the 1st Mar Div planned to advance the 7th and 5th RCTs in column along the Koto-ri—Hagaru-ri axis, to be followed by the 1st RCT after being relieved in the south. The problems of command were increased by the multiplicity of X Corps plans and orders, some of which were cancelled and superseded before they could be put into effect. In extenuation, high-level planners might have pleaded that the situation was so fluid as to create the



Anti-guerrilla patrols search houses of Kojo for by-passed North Koreans, after 1st Marines had prevented enemy from using escape routes through this village.

necessity for frequent amendments.

The motives and purposes of Red China remained a mystery when the Marine advance northward began on 31 October with RCT 7 completing its lift by rail from Wonsan to Hamhung. As spearhead, the regiment had orders to relieve the 26th ROK Regt on 2 November in the vicinity of Majon-dong.

Owing to the lack of troops for so many diversified tasks, the participation of RCT 5 had to be postponed. This regiment was sent late in October on patrol assignments—the 1st Bn at Yonghung, and the 2d and 3d Bns in the Munchon area. Not until 2 November did the latter two units move up to Hamhung, while the other battalion proceeded from Yonghung to Chigyong for new patrol duties lasting until the 11th. Meanwhile the 7th Marines, youngest regiment of the division, with the largest percentage of reservists,\* had won the distinction of being the first American unit to engage with CCF troops in all-out combat.

The men had been issued winter clothing at Wonsan which was appreciated during the 20-mile motor lift from Hamhung to the Majon-dong area on 1 November. Relief of the 26th ROK Regt, which had been pushed back by CCF troops, was effected at 1030 next morning with 1/7 and 2/7 assaulting in column and 3/7 in reserve. Only light and scattered resistance was encountered in a 1,300-yard advance, and at 1630 positions were consolidated for the night while the ROK regiment pulled out to

\*An article by Capt Ernest H. Guisti, in the September issue of the GAZETTE, was devoted to the *Minute Men of 1950*—the reservists of the Marine Corps.

the rear. Front line observation indicated that Chinese forces were concentrating in the Sudong area, which was assigned as the regimental objective for the following day. Shortly after midnight, however, the enemy took matters in his own hands by launching a surprise assault.

The Marines occupied an oblong perimeter about 6,000 yards in length and 2,000 in width (Map 3). In the advance was 1/7, with one company in the defile and the other two dug in along the high ground on each side of the road. Farther back were two companies of 2/7 at distances of 700 to 1,000 yards from the road, one on the right and one on the left. The three companies of 3/7 closed up the rear, giving added protection to the service units, motor transport company, and 3d Bn of the 11th Marines on the inside of the perimeter.

The weird sound of bugles and whistles was the signal for CCF attacks shortly after midnight on both flanks of 1/7. Soon 2/7 was receiving small arms, automatic, and mortar fire from front and flank on each side of the road. At 0430 two tanks approaching the 1st Bn CP were driven off by 75mm recoilless and 3.5-inch rocket fire, one of them being destroyed. Some confusion ensued during the night fighting, but the only temporary enemy penetration was into the 4.2-inch mortar position. At daybreak the attacks continued with decreasing intensity in the 1st Bn zone, though infiltrating enemy set up a road block at a bridge south of Sudong. Covering fire cut the MSR behind the 1st and 2d Bns, so that air drops of supplies had to be made. Meanwhile the Div Recon Co moved on the flank of this position in combination with air strikes forcing an abandonment of the roadblock late that afternoon.

Chinese losses were estimated at 662 killed in the 1st Bn zone alone. Firing ceased at dusk and the regiment spent a quiet night in its perimeter. At 1000 on 4 November, after patrols reported the enemy withdrawing north of Sudong, the advance began with the 1st and 3d Bns in column and the 2d in reserve. Moderate resistance occurred as the regiment passed through Sudong and pushed on toward the Chinhung-ni area, where five enemy tanks were surprised by infantry and air. Only one escaped with a whole skin, the others being destroyed by 3.5-inch rockets, airplane rockets, and 75mm recoilless fire. After an advance of 6,000 yards the regiment dug in for the night on high ground in the vicinity of Chinhung-ni.

THE MARINE ATTACK was continued on the morning of the 5th against Chinese resistance which stiffened to such an extent that the regiment forged ahead only 300 yards. Heavy automatic, mortar, and even artillery fire hit the Marines at the jump-off, and the best efforts of supporting arms could not dislodge the enemy from prepared positions on the high ground on both sides of the road. The next day's attack was a repetition, and twice

the 3d Bn had to repel counterattacks in company strength after passing through the 1st Bn to lead an advance of about 1,000 yards.

In 48 hours of hard fighting the Leathernecks had gained less than a mile. Yet it was this period of hard slugging which broke the back of Chinese resistance as Marine air and artillery hammered away at well-concealed positions along reverse slopes. For on 7 November the 3d Bn moved out to find the enemy withdrawn from the high ground commanding Chinhung-ni. Patrols reported no contacts and OY observation spotted CCF remnants retreating toward the Yudam-ni area, which was thoroughly worked over by Marine air.

This was the finish of the four-day fight representing the first large-scale clash of American troops with the forces of Red China. PW interrogations revealed that the 7th Marines had collided with three regiments of the 124th CCF Div. The Leathernecks had not won an easy victory, what with losses of 46 killed and 264 wounded. But estimates of enemy casualties ran as high as 9,000, and G-2 reports established that the Chinese division had been so severely mauled that it virtually ceased to exist as an effective unit.

THESE MATERIAL RESULTS were no more important than the moral gains. Chinese guerrilla techniques had won a formidable reputation not only in WW II but also during the ensuing civil struggle between Communists and Nationalists. This tactical system, in fact, had been adopted in large part by the North Korean army, so that the Marines encountered no radically new methods or weapons except the bugles or whistles used for signalling. CCF units appeared to be better trained and led, however, than a majority of the NK troops. They pushed home their night attacks with more skill and persistence, and their command functioned much better above the company level. Tactical maneuvers were executed with precise timing and direction, though little initiative appeared to be exercised at the platoon and company level.

Barring such lapses, the new enemy had shown himself to be a stubborn and dangerous adversary in mountain country made to order for his tactics. Nevertheless, the fight from Sudong to Chinhung-ni had demonstrated the all-around soundness of Marine command and basic training at a ruinous cost to the Chinese. The precept, as an example set for all other American units in Korea, was one of the most worthwhile results of the victory won by the 7th Marines.

On 10 November, after two days devoted to patrolling, the regiment moved unopposed by motor lift from positions 1,000 yards north of Chinhung-ni to Koto-ri. Patrols sent out from this point reported only a minor enemy contact in 48 hours. And on the 13th the advance was continued toward Hagaru-ri, where all three battalions were assembled during the next two days.

The middle of November dates a second stage in the concentration of 1st Mar Div elements as RCT-5 moved up behind RCT-7. On 4 November, after two days in Hamhung, 2/5 and 3/5 had been sent by X Corps orders on reconnaissance into the Sinhung Valley stretching northward to the Fusen Reservoir. No large enemy forces being met in extensive patrolling, the two battalions were recalled on the 10th to Hamhung. During the next three days RCT-5 was assigned to protective positions along the Hamhung-Hagaru-ri MSR—3/5 at Chinhung-ni, 2/5 at Koto-ri, and 1/5 at Majon-dong after being relieved at Chigyong. Meanwhile, RCT-1 was being relieved in the south to advance to an assembly area at Chigyong.

From 15 to 19 November the positions of Marine units remained little changed. No enemy were contacted except a CCF force of 200, dispersed west of Hagaru-ri by an attack of the 1st Bn, RCT-7. At this time the 1st Mar Div appeared to be making a tortoise's progress as compared to the gains of other X Corps units in the north. Elements of I ROK Corps, driving along the coast, had already advanced to the important Nanam-Chongji industrial area only a few miles south of the Manchurian border. And though the 7th Inf Div had landed three days later than the Marines, Gen Smith sent his congratulations on 22 November to MajGen David G. Barr, commanding the Army troops who reached the Yalu River near Hyesanjin. Neither the ROK forces nor the 7th Div had met any serious opposition, despite the persistent reports to Corps and Division G-2 of large CCF forces infiltrating down from the border.

Many of these reports were based on information given by terrified Korean refugees from mountain villages. If such rumors were to be taken seriously, there was reason for alarm as to enemy strength. On 19 November, for instance, a civilian reported 50,000 enemy soldiers to be approaching Hagaru-ri. Refugees declared the next day that 13,000 CCF troops were in the vicinity of Sinhung-ni.

SUCH VAGUE ESTIMATES had to be taken with a grain of salt, for a different story was told by actual observation and contacts. If these sources were to be credited, no enemy force larger than a few hundred had been seen since the retreat of the defeated and decimated 124th CCF Div. Thus it was that 1st Mar Div G-2 concluded on 24 November that "aerial observation . . . together with lack of aggressiveness on part of enemy in 5th and 7th Marines' area indicate a generally defensive attitude." But the same analysis warned that "increased activity along MSR and against our left flank is likely and is not to be considered lightly."

Such was the confidence of high-level planners that X Corps sent instructions to the 1st Mar Div on 20 November concerning the occupation of the Yalu line. Political rather than military aspects were emphasized, and it was stated that only units of minimum size would be





sent to the immediate vicinity of the border. The integrity of Manchurian territory, in short, was to be meticulously respected.

The 1st Mar Div was still about 125 road miles from the border on this date. But the lesson of the Majon-ni MSR had not been wasted, and Gen Smith neglected no measures for the protection of a larger force at the end of a longer route. Relying on personal observation as well as G-2 reports, he made helicopter flights over the tortuous length of Korean mountain road that was soon to become world-famous.

The first 33 miles beyond Hamhung were served by a narrow-gauge railway ending at Chinhung-ni. Up to this point the parallel road climbed gradually, but from the railhead "over the hump" to Koto-ri and Hagaru-ri an ascent of 2,400 feet was made in one stretch of 10,000 yards.

This was the MSR—a total of 56 road miles from Hamhung to the foot of Chosin Reservoir, nearly half of them consisting of a winding, dirt trail clinging precariously to the sides of bleak mountains. A skid might send a supply truck over the edge to the rocks a hundred feet below, or an ailing carburetor might halt an entire convoy. Yet the welfare of thousands of Marines depended on keeping the wheels rolling along the MSR from Hamhung to Hagaru-ri!

Seldom in Marine Corps history has every decision of command been fraught with as much significance. And it is noteworthy that at a time of general optimism, both in top-level military and state circles, Gen Smith felt grave concern as early as 15 November over the situation of the 1st Mar Div. Not only was its left flank wide open, but a gap of 80 miles invited enemy penetration between the Marines and the nearest units of the Eighth Army to the west. Not only were large CCF forces rumored to be in northern Korea, but another formidable enemy had already invaded the mountains—the first zero nights, indicating the approach of General Winter. On 14 November, while inspecting installations at Koto-ri, the CG 1st Mar Div found the small streams frozen and the MSR glazed in places with ice. Cases of frostbite had been reported by the 7th Marines, though the men were equipped with parkas and sleeping bags.

Corps orders left a good deal of latitude to units in mission to the border, and during the period from 13 to 20 November Gen Smith made haste slowly and methodically. Supplies and ammunition were sent by rail from Hamhung to Chinhung-ni, then trucked to dumps at Koto-ri and Hagaru-ri. Engineers worked tirelessly on the MSR, installing culverts and making ready for icy going. As added logistical insurance, plans were approved for building a 5,000-foot strip for C-47s and C-119s at Hagaru-ri, though air alone could not solve the supply problem.

FROM 20 TO 22 NOVEMBER, moreover, Gen Smith put into effect the third step of his concentration. New Corps orders sent RCT-7 forward on the west side of Chosin Reservoir and RCT-5 on the east side. RCT-1 was to be relieved at Chigyong by 3d Inf Div elements and ROKs, thus making it possible for the CG 1st Mar Div to carry out his preconceived plan of moving up that regiment to guard the MSR. Thus, in effect, the division would have two RCTs in assault and one in reserve, with the 11th Marines and other support units being disposed where they could be most useful.

The Marine advance was ordered in preparation for the combined offensive of the Eighth Army and X Corps scheduled for the 24th. From the 21st until that date the 5th Marines patrolled vigorously east of the Reservoir covering a wide area without flushing out any large enemy group. The same ominous lull prevailed west of the Reservoir along the steep 14-mile road from Hagaru-ri to Yudam-ni. Baker Co of the 7th Marines, plodding through snowdrifts, reached the halfway point at Sinhung-ni on the 22d, meeting only a retiring enemy force of about company strength. The entire 1st Bn continued to push toward Yudam-ni during the next two days, advancing 2,500 yards northwest of Sinhung-ni against negligible opposition consisting largely of undefended road blocks.

ON 24 NOVEMBER, D-DAY of the combined offensive, Gen Douglas MacArthur's message was read to X Corps troops. "The massive compression envelopment in North Korea against the new Red armies operating there is now approaching its decisive effort," declared the supreme commander. During the past three weeks, he added, our air forces had successfully interdicted CCF lines of support from the north so as to cut off reinforcements. Meanwhile the eastern or X Corps sector of the pincer had advanced to reach a commanding enveloping position. "This morning the western sector of the pincer moves forward in general assault to complete the compression and close the vise. If successful, this should fulfill all practicable purposes and end the war."

Despite the optimism of the message, there were disturbing indications at this date that at least four

divisions might be advancing into the zone of the 1st Mar Div. Air reconnaissance still reported no large enemy groups observed, though noting such clues as paths left by many footprints. It seemed incredible that large enemy forces were hiding by day in villages, for it was not then known that a battalion of Chinese could crowd into a hamlet of 20 houses. Nevertheless, Division G-2 could not discount PW identifications of these CCF units—the 60th, 59th, and 58th Divs of the 20th Army, and the attached 89th Div. The first three, in that order, were reported to be approaching the Yudam-ni area on 21 or 22 November.

New X Corps orders of the 24th outlined the part of the 1st Mar Div in the general offensive. RCT-7 was to seize Yudam-ni at once. RCT-5, upon relief by 7th Inf Div elements, was to advance into the Yudam-ni area after shifting from the east to the west side of Chosin Reservoir. Before these moves could be made, the situation was changed by reports of heavy resistance encountered by the Eighth Army. Amended X Corps orders of the 25th, therefore, called for a 1st Mar Div drive westward to cut CCF communications at Mupyong-ni. The object of this attack on the enemy's flank was to relieve pressure on the Eighth Army (Map 1).

The Division plan of 26 November directed RCT-5 to pass through RCT-7 west of Yudam-ni and advance to the west. Relief of the former was effected by the 1st Bn, 32d Inf, and that evening 2/5 entered the perimeter of RCT-7, which had occupied Yudam-ni the previous afternoon against light resistance.

Meanwhile, RCT-1 had completed its movement from the Chiyong area to defensive positions along the MSR—1/1 at Chinhung-ni, 2/1 at Koto-ri, and 3/1 at Hagaru-ri. Thus the entire division was pulled together into an area that could be traversed from front to rear in an hour by jeep.

At 0830 ON THE 27TH the 2d Bn of RCT-5 passed through elements of RCT-7 and continued the attack west of Yudam-ni, while the latter regiment sent out patrols and seized two hills still held by by-passed enemy elements. At last, after five days of suspiciously light resistance in this zone, the Chinese put up a stiff fight against 2/5 with automatic and mortar fire from prepared positions. Air strikes and artillery fires had to be requested for the reduction of CCF pillboxes. The assault troops gained 1600 yards, then dug in for the night astride the road about 6500 yards west of Yudam-ni. The other two battalions of RCT-5 moved up to an assembly area in the rear, while RCT-7 occupied positions about 4900 yards southwest of the town.

By this time, unfortunately, the situation of the Eighth Army had deteriorated too far for the Marine advance to relieve the pressure. Large CCF forces, driving through the mountains into the gap between Eighth Army and

X Corps units, struck the former on the 25th. The disintegration of the II ROK Corps on the right flank necessitated a general Eighth Army withdrawal on the 26th which reached serious proportions the following day. Meanwhile the Chinese were completing their infiltration into the X Corps zone.

In the Yudam-ni area the first few hours of darkness on the 27th were uneventful. Then, just before midnight, both the 5th and 7th Marines came under heavy attack. This was the beginning of the great CCF counterstroke in the X Corps zone that was to make 28 November a landmark of Marine Corps history. Air observation that morning revealed that the MSR had been severed by formidable CCF numbers between Koto-ri and Hagaru-ri as well as between the latter point and Yudam-ni. Thus the 5th and 7th Marines, cut off from the rest of the division, were forced to withdraw into a perimeter near Yudam-ni as heavy pressure was applied in their rear. The retreat of the Eighth Army added to the isolation of the two Marine regiments threatened with envelopment by crushing numbers.

CCF FORCES, MARCHING BY NIGHT and hiding in villages or caves by day, had contrived to move eight divisions within striking distance of the 1st Mar Div. As it later appeared, the CCF command had chosen between three courses of action. An attack might have been aimed southward through the 3d Inf Div, scattered over an area of 400 square miles, to seize the vital Hungham-Hamhung supply base. Or an attack might have been launched in the north with the object of cutting off the dispersed 7th Inf Div and I ROK Corps. But the Chinese generals elected to hurl their massed strength against the 1st Mar Div—the only relatively concentrated unit of X Corps.

This concentration, completed within the last 48 hours, had been the steadfast goal of Gen Smith, whose writings reveal a grimly realistic view of the situation throughout the past two weeks. When the blow fell, he set up his CP at Hagaru-ri on the 28th to take personal charge of the defense after flying with his staff from Hungham.

If the 1st Mar Div had seemed to advance like a tortoise as compared to other X Corps units, it was now able to withdraw into a defensive shell made possible by concentration. Far from finding a dispersed force, the enemy was confronted by four bristling perimeters, held in battalion strength or greater, at Yudam-ni, Hagaru-ri, Koto-ri, and Chinhung-ni. Within these fortresses Marine firepower was prepared to operate on a 360° front, and Marine service troops were prepared to double as infantry. For the 1st Mar Div was up against a fight for survival, and every Leatherneck from Gen Smith to the newest private would be needed to beat off an overwhelming enemy.

USMC

*Next Month: Breakout From the Reservoir—Marine Epic of Fire and Ice.*



# **BREAKOUT FROM THE RESERVOIR**

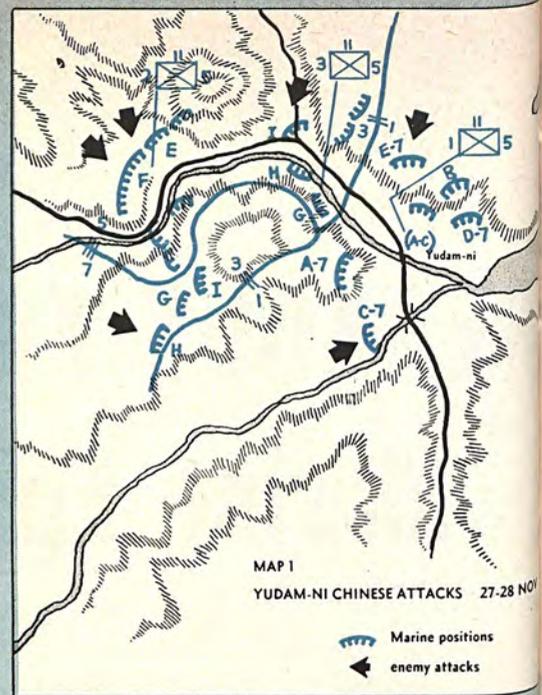
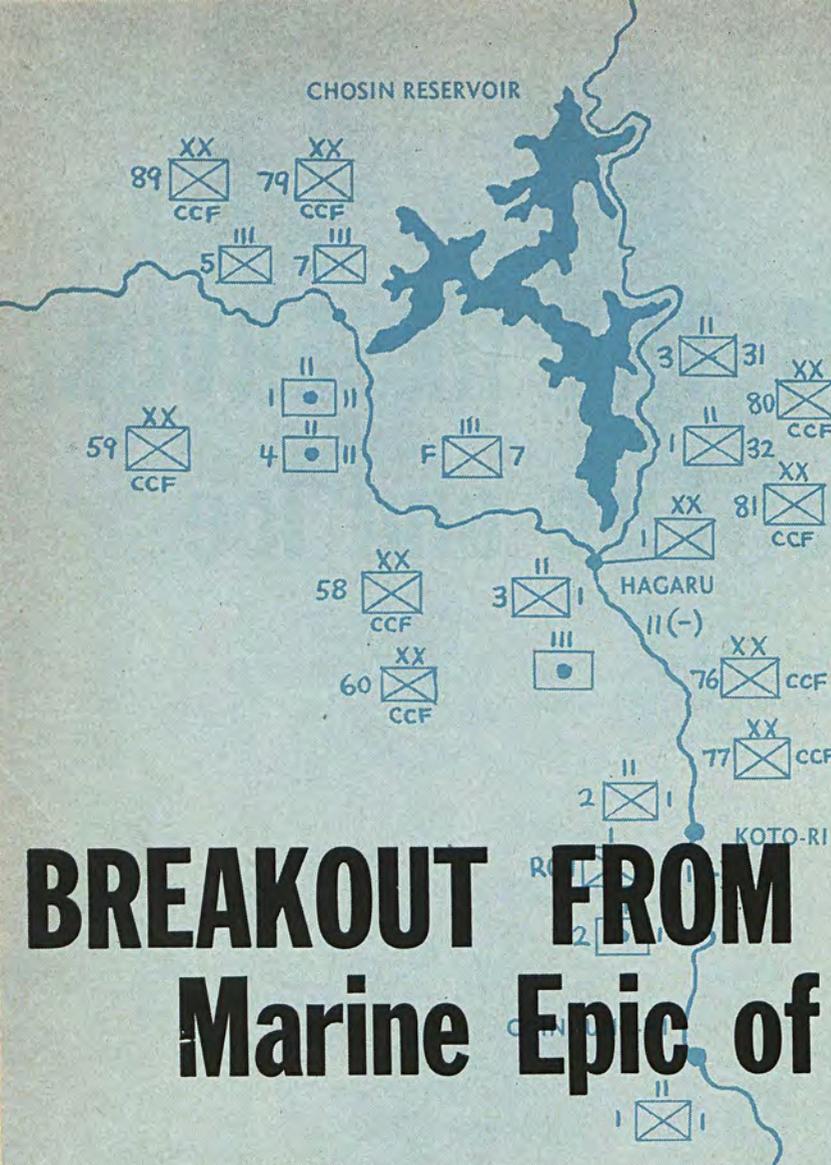
## **Marine Epic of Fire and Ice**

*By Lynn Montross*

Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps

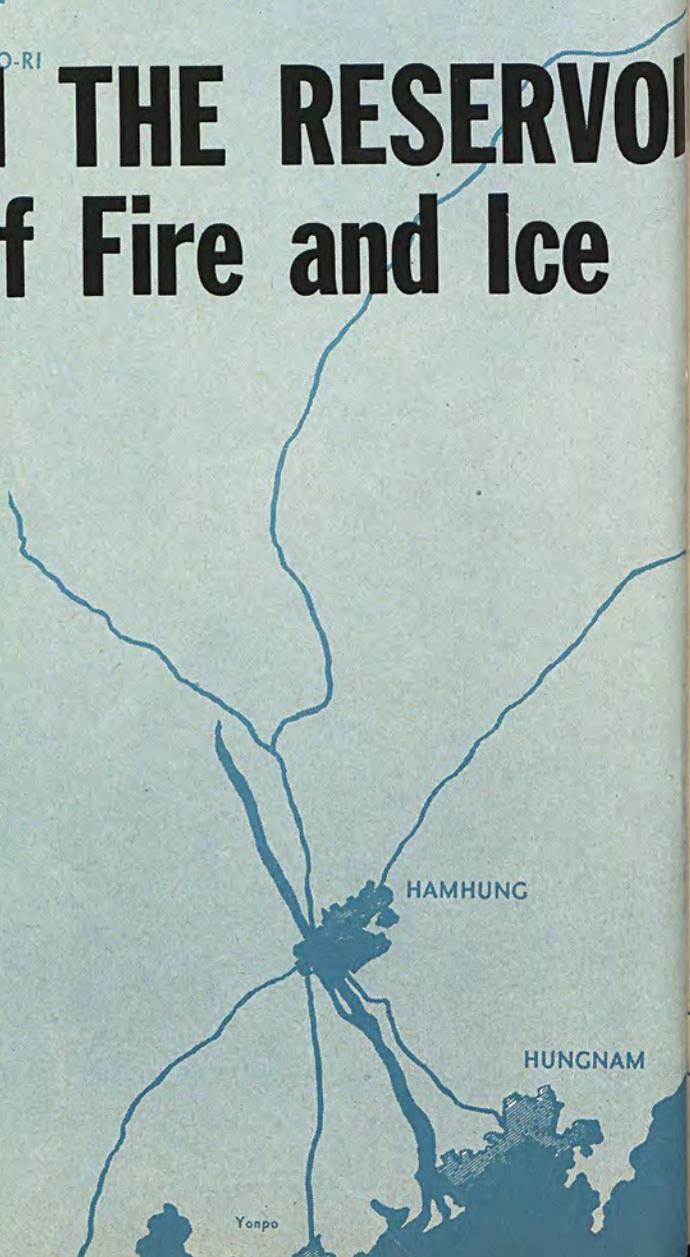
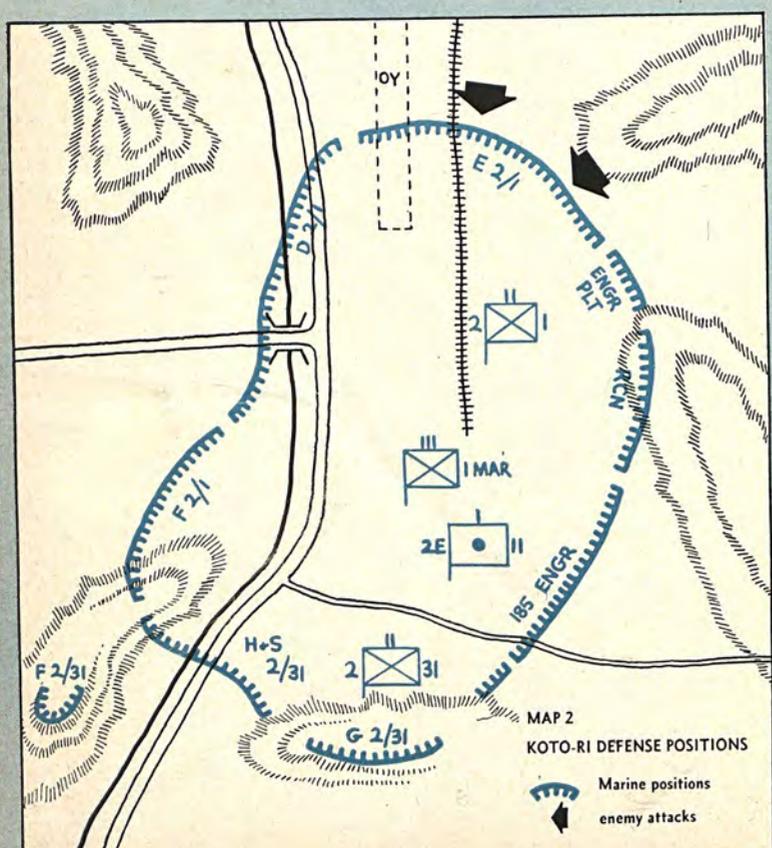


Reprinted from November 1951 issue of The Marine Corps Gazette



# BREAKOUT FROM THE RESERVOIR

## Marine Epic of Fire and Ice



IN THE EARLY HOURS OF 28 NOVEMBER 1950 THE thermometer dropped to 20 degrees below zero in the Yudam-ni area, the farthest advance of the 1st Mar Div west of the Chosin Reservoir. The ground was covered with snow and ice, and a knife-edged wind of 25 knots slashed across the bleak plain surrounded by frozen mountains.

Marine weapons were not always the same old reliable friends at this temperature. The moving parts of carbines and BARs often failed to function. The base plates of mortars warped or cracked. The pins of grenades stuck in an emergency. Even the howitzers no longer spoke with the same authority, for it sometimes took the 105s several minutes to return to firing position after a discharge.

Iron and steel might balk in the paralyzing cold, but there was no respite for the flesh and blood of the 1st Mar Div. These Leathernecks, muffled to the eyes in parkas, wearing shoe pacs and mittens, were fighting for survival against the great counterstroke of eight Chinese Communist divisions in the X Corps zone.

The isolation of the 1st Mar Div was increased by the retreat of the Eighth Army, following the failure of the "end the war" offensive launched by all UN forces in Korea on 24 November. Next day the Chinese struck back by surprise, having infiltrated in large numbers through the mountains and into the wide gap between the Eighth Army on the west and X Corps on the east. When the II ROK Corps disintegrated on the Eighth Army's right flank, other units were forced to begin a withdrawal which left the Marines exposed to the full fury of the new enemy blow, the counterstroke of the 28th.

But there was one consolation. If the 1st Mar Div was the most exposed of all major X Corps units, it was also the most prepared. With the 3d Inf Div scattered over a wide area to the south, the 7th Inf Div almost as dispersed to the north, and the I ROK Corps far away along the coast, only the Marines were relatively concentrated.

This concentration was not owed to any happy coincidence. It was largely the work of MajGen Oliver P. Smith, CG of the 1st Mar Div, and his staff. For on 26 October, at the height of the Wonsan administrative landing, the division had been given a mission northward to the border of Manchuria simultaneously with a mission southward to block the escape of defeated North Korean remnants.<sup>1</sup> This meant that the first objectives of the Marines in Northeast Korea were Hamhung and Kojo, 118 miles apart. High-level planners anticipated little opposition, since G-2 reports indicated that organ-

<sup>1</sup>An article in the October GAZETTE was devoted to the Wonsan landing and 1st Mar Div missions of the following month.

By Lynn Montross

In cooperation with the Historical Division, Headquarters U. S. Marine Corps, the GAZETTE herewith presents another in a series of official accounts dealing with Marine operations in Korea. Prepared by writers and researchers of the Historical Division, these articles are based on available records and reports from units in Korea. Also to be treated in this series:

The Hungnam Evacuation  
Anti-Guerrilla Operations in South Korea  
The Drive to the 38th Parallel

Publication is scheduled for consecutive monthly issues.

Admittedly it is too soon to write a definitive history of Marine fighting in Korea. Not only are enemy sources lacking, but even Marine and Army records are still incomplete. Articles of the length to be used in the GAZETTE, moreover, do not allow space for more than an outline of operations which will ultimately be given the detailed treatment of a monograph.

But timeliness is also an end to be sought, and these preliminary narratives are based on Marine and Army reports received up to this time. These articles are presented in the hope that GAZETTE readers will feel free to add to the incomplete record. This is an invitation, therefore, for you to supplement the existing record. Send your comments and criticism, as well as any other information you can make available, to the Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, Washington 25, D. C.

ized NK resistance had been nearly destroyed by the coordinated September offensive of X Corps at Inchon-Seoul and the Eighth Army in southern Korea. And though the reports recognized the possibility of Russian or Chinese Communist intervention, the danger was not considered imminent.

These assumptions proved to be premature, for Gen Smith soon had virtually two separate wars on his hands. While RCT-1 dealt with formidable NK numbers in the southern sector, RCT-7 was advancing in the north toward the first American clash with the invaders from Red China. The Marines won such smashing victories in both encounters that by the middle of November only minor enemy contacts were reported in the X Corps zone. Elements of the 7th Inf Div were pushing toward the Yalu River almost unopposed, while I ROK Corps advanced up the coast nearly to the border of Manchuria.

At this time, before the 3d Inf Div took over in the south, Gen Smith had troops both at Majon-ni and Hagaru, 149 road miles apart. Other Marine units, including tankmen and artillery doubling as infantry, were widely dispersed on a variety of blocking and protective duties.

It was fortunate for the 1st Mar Div that the commanding general viewed the situation realistically, despite the confidence of American newspapers that some of the troops would be "home by Christmas." As early as 15 November he was concerned about his open left flank, separated by a gap of 80 miles from the Eighth Army on the west. Security appealed to him more than haste in the mission to the border, and he pulled his units together until the entire division was concentrated from Chinhung-ni to Hagaru, a distance of 21 miles.



These preparations did not come a moment too soon. Infiltrating CCF divisions, marching by night and hiding by day, were even then shunning combat while massing to deal a decisive surprise blow. When they struck on the 25th to shatter the Eighth Army offensive, the 5th and 7th Marines were sent by X Corps orders to attack west of Yudam-ni for the purpose of relieving the pressure. The Leathernecks gained 1,500 meters on the 27th, but it was too late to save the Eighth Army from disaster. It might have been too late for the Marines to save themselves if their concentration had not been completed within the past 48 hours.

With the lack of high-level enemy sources, it can only be conjectured as to why CCF generals hurled their strength against the most concentrated and battle-hardened division of X Corps. No doubt the wide open left flank of the 1st Mar Div invited attack from enemy forces driving a wedge between the Eighth Army and X Corps. But it is also probable that the tenuous MSR entered into the equation.

Soon the eyes of the world would be fixed on this 56-mile stretch of dirt road twisting through the mountains of Northeast Korea. It was not merely the main supply route, it was the only one—the lifeline for thousands of Marines out at the end of a strategic limb. The first 35 miles, from Hamhung to Chinhung-ni, were covered by a narrow-gauge railway as well as a road making a comparatively gradual ascent through a broad valley. Supplies had to be trucked from the Chinhung-ni railhead onward, and the road climbed 2400 feet in the 10 miles “over the hump” to Koto-ri. Vehicles could proceed only in single file at times, along a trail hugging the sides of the mountains, with a precipitous drop on one side and a cliff on the other. The last 11 miles, from Koto-ri to Hagaru, were not as difficult, though flanked by mountains offering ideal sites for road blocks or ambushes.

The necessity for maintaining this lifeline limited Gen Smith's concentration. Thus while the 5th and 7th Marines were operating out of Hagaru, he assigned the three battalions of the 1st Marines to defensive positions along the MSR—1/1 at the Chinhung-ni railhead, 2/1 at Koto-ri, and 3/1 at Hagaru. These moves could not be completed until the late date of 26 November, owing to delays in the relief of the regiment. And by that time X Corps orders made it necessary to send the other two infantry regiments forward to Yudam-ni.

THIS withdrawal . . . will become an epic in the annals of the Marine Corps. Seldom, if ever, have Marines been forced to battle against comparable odds. The enemy in overwhelming force was on all sides, necessitating determined attacks to the front to clear the way, resolute rear guard actions to keep the enemy from closing in, and flank protection to guard the trains and the wounded in the center of the column. Step by step, the division fought its way for a distance of thirty-five miles, always against unremitting pressure from the enemy.

—MAJGEN OLIVER P. SMITH,  
CG 1st Marine Division

Curiously enough, three CCF prisoners gave their Marine G-2 questioners an accurate preview of the enemy plan. Concealed CCF divisions, they asserted, would avoid battle until the main Marine column had been drawn into a maximum forward movement. Then the decisive effort would be directed against the MSR for the purpose of cutting off and enveloping the column as it reacted to pressure from the rear.

Astonishing as it may seem that CCF enlisted men should have a grasp of command decisions, the enemy attack developed along those lines in the early hours of 28 November. While the 5th and 7th Marines were being assailed in the Yudam-ni area, the MSR was cut off at their rear between Yudam-ni and Hagaru, and between the latter point and Koto-ri.

Anticipating enemy intentions, CO 7th Marines had sent Fox Co, reinforced by a HMG section and 81mm mortar section, from Hagaru to Sinhung-ni on the afternoon of the 27th with a mission of protecting the 4,000-foot mountain pass on the road to Yudam-ni. Capt William E. Barber, who had reconnoitered the position, set up a 360° perimeter near the summit of a hill commanding the route about a mile west of the pass. The early hours of darkness passed quietly. Then at 0200 the Chinese launched the first of the night attacks that were to keep Fox Co surrounded and in continual peril for five days. No attempt at surprise was made by the enemy

who came on with automatic weapons and grenades. Although the CCF strength was estimated at two companies it seemed to be constantly kept up by reinforcements in spite of heavy casualties.

Fox Co had a six-hour fight for survival in the early morning hours of 28 November. Once the pattern of enemy attack had been established, Capt Barber shifted his heavy machine guns to cover the draws which checked CCF efforts. Meanwhile the artillery FO called for fires from Hagaru.

The 240 Leathernecks on the hill were contending against cold as well as superior enemy numbers. Holes could be dug only with difficulty in the frozen soil, and low temperatures caused the 3.5-inch rockets to miss frequently due to incomplete burning of the propellant.

The Chinese came on repeatedly within 40 yards and throw concussion grenades which exploded with more sound than fury. The Marines were also bombarded with shouted invitations in the English language: “He-

Americans, surrender! We won't kill you! Come and get your warm gear!"

One enemy penetration endangered the CP and indeed the whole perimeter. A rifle platoon was inundated by sheer human tonnage and one of the machine guns lost. But the Leathernecks recaptured the weapon and restored their lines by a desperate counterattack. So hot was this fight that only four men of the platoon came out without a scratch.

At 0800 the Chinese had enough. They withdrew to surrounding heights and contented themselves with long-range sniping. Marine losses, as listed by 1stSgt Charles B. Dana, amounted to 20 killed, three missing, and 54 wounded. The latter were removed to warming tents near the crest of the hill, but a helicopter attempting to evacuate the worst cases was driven away by CCF small-arms fire.

A radio message from CO 7th Marines at 1430 instructed Capt Barber to hold tight until reinforcements could be sent. Late that afternoon an air drop of food and ammunition was 60 per cent effective. And at dusk the beleaguered Leathernecks, already reduced a third by battle and frostbite casualties, prepared for another Chinese attack.

This was no petty local fight, affecting only the smallest of the 1st Mar Div's positions. The fortunes of the largest were directly concerned—the position held at Yudam-ni by two reinforced regiments, the 5th and 7th Marines plus support troops.

They, too, had been in a battle for survival throughout the early hours of the 28th. They, too, were cut off and surrounded by superior numbers, and their chances of rejoining the rest of the division depended on Fox Co protecting the key mountain pass.

The deserted town of Yudam-ni, badly battered by air strikes, occupied a plain at the water's edge on the west side of Chosin Reservoir (Map 1). Three valleys, extending like spokes from this strategic hub, formed a passage for roads leading to the west, southwest, and northwest through surrounding mountains.

The 2d Bn of RCT-5, after advancing on the 27th, dug in for the night on level ground astride the road in the northwest valley. The 3d Bn was in support, a mile and a half to the rear, and the 1st Bn farther back in reserve. Meanwhile RCT-7 (less two companies) was deployed on high ground commanding the road in the southwest

valley (Map 1).

Enemy attacks, beginning before midnight, reached their climax between 0200 and first light. The extended lines of RCT-5 and RCT-7 beat off a succession of assaults delivered at several points simultaneously by enemy groups ranging from company to battalion strength. Rear areas were no more immune than advanced positions, since the enemy had infiltrated from three directions.

Thus the attack on 2/5 was soon followed by an equally determined effort against 3/5, a mile and a half to the rear. In both instances the Chinese struck at the junction between extended companies, and service personnel had to fight at close quarters as infantry to save the two CPs from being overrun. Counterattack eventually restored both positions, but it was nip and tuck for several hours. Even 1/5, far back in reserve, was under assault from Chinese who seemed to be everywhere. Some of the Charlie Co veterans were "old China

hands," and they replied to surrender invitations with insults in the enemy's own tongue. Bullets proved to be more convincing, for RCT-5 was hard-pressed.

Meanwhile, the three battalion sectors of RCT-7 were also being overrun. How Co of 3/7, driven from Hill 1402 by vastly superior numbers, retook the position in a counterattack, only to lose it again at 0435. The remnants of the company retired on 2/5 positions just as 2/7 came under heavy attack north of Yudam-ni. Regimental distinctions meant so little that two platoons of



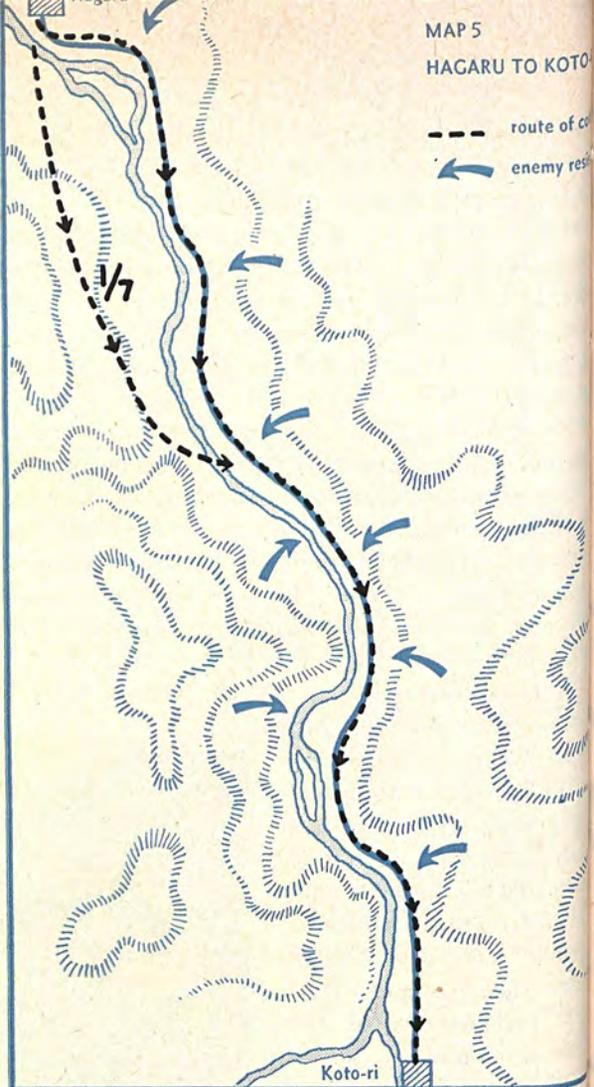
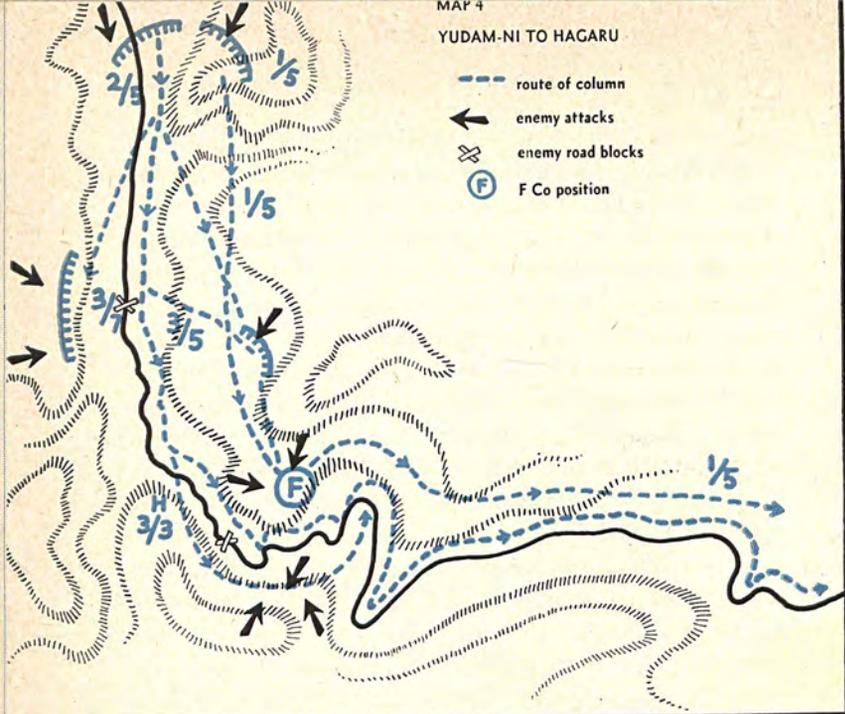
Truck bogs down in snow on road south of Koto-ri.

1/5 were rushed to reinforce 2/7 and take part in the counterattack which recovered lost ground. Enemy pressure on 1/7 to the south of Yudam-ni was not as heavy, but Charlie Co remained isolated and surrounded all day.

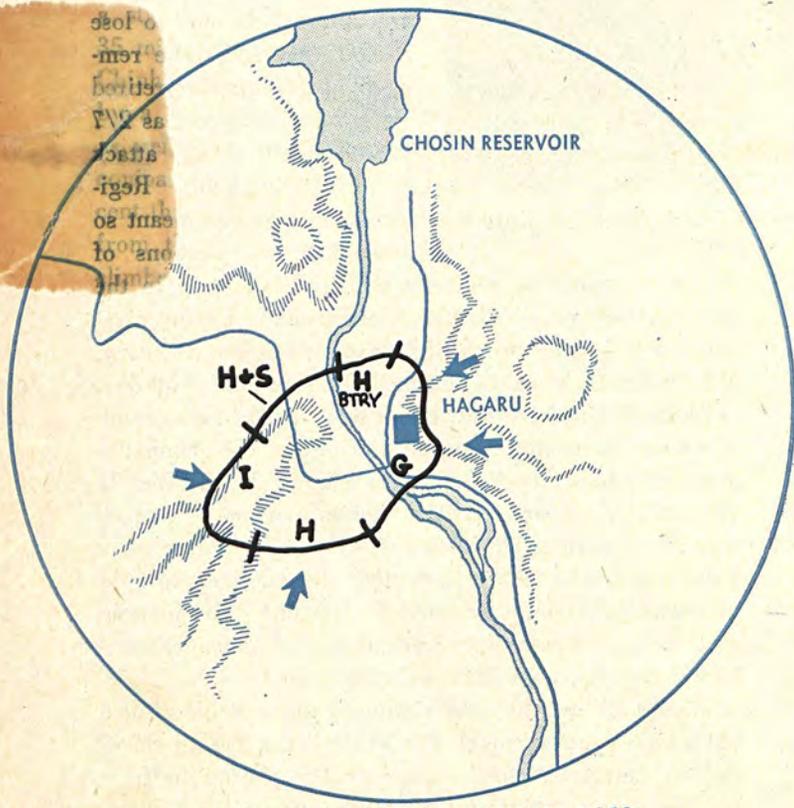
At first light the Corsairs had their usual discouraging effect on the enemy, but the Marines of the Yudam-ni area knew that they had been in a fight. World War II veterans had seldom seen a higher proportion of wounded. There were other casualties who had not stopped a bullet—men who leaped from their sleeping bags to fight in stocking feet until crippled by frostbite. The blocked road to Hagaru prevented evacuation, and casualties overflowed the sick bays into warming tents.

These CCF attacks were obviously the first blows of a large-scale counterstroke. For at daybreak the 2d Bn of the 1st Marines sighted enemy groups closing in from two directions on Koto-ri, 25 miles to the rear of Yudam-

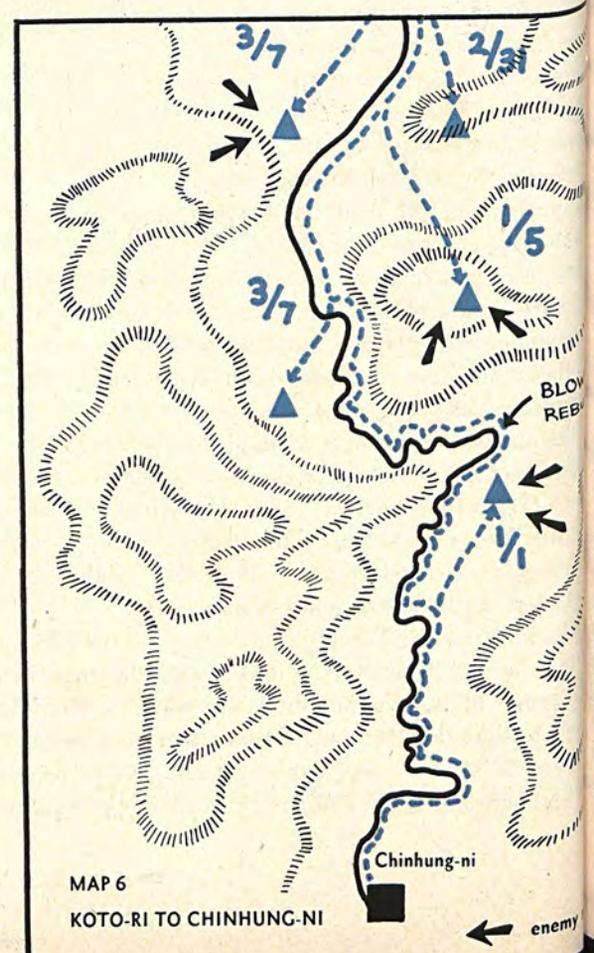




ABOVE: Yudam-ni to Hagaru. RIGHT: Hagaru to Koto-ri. LOWER RIGHT: Koto-ri to Chinghung-ni. BELOW: Hagaru defense positions on 1 December.



MAP 3 HAGARU DEFENSE POSITIONS 1 DEC  
Marine positions  
← enemy attacks



MAP 6  
KOTO-RI TO CHINHUNG-NI  
← enemy

ni. Air observation reported no less than five road blocks between Koto-ri and Hagaru, all of them strongly manned, as well as three between Hagaru and Sinhung-ni.

Eight enemy divisions, as confirmed later by PW identifications, were now massed against the 1st Mar Div. Five of them delivered the opening attacks—the 59th, 79th and 89th in the Yudam-ni area, the 58th along the MSR north of Hagaru, and the 60th astride the MSR between Hagaru and Koto-ri. In addition, the 80th and 81st Divisions were approaching on both sides of the Reservoir, followed by the 90th in reserve.

The enemy, in short, had committed two armies—the 20th and 27th, of four divisions each—to the attack along a 25-mile front. Since a CCF division included three infantry regiments and an artillery battalion, the total of the forces massed against the 1st Marine Division could hardly have been less than 80,000 men—not soldiers in the Western sense, but Oriental coolies who were considered as expendable as cartridges by their Communist officers.

SELDOM, IF EVER, in 175 years of Marine Corps history had so many Leathernecks been in such danger of a major disaster. The utmost in courage, endurance, and fighting spirit could be expected by the command from the ranks. But even these essentials might not be enough if the command failed the ranks with a costly error in judgment. For this was a crisis which called for mental as well as physical valor.

Among the high-level planners the Marines were ably represented by Col Edward H. Forney. One of the leading planners of the Inchon-Seoul operation,<sup>2</sup> he continued to serve as deputy chief of staff under MajGen Edward S. Almond, CG X Corps, until the last day of the year. On 28 November, when Gen Almond was summoned to Tokyo to confer with the supreme command, he directed Col Forney to reconnoiter the 1st Mar Div MSR as far as Hagaru. It was largely due to this staff officer's report that X Corps had its first comprehensive picture of the seriousness of the CCF attack and the danger to Army as well as Marine elements in the Chosin Reservoir area.

The original X Corps plans for the combined offensive with the Eighth Army had called for a 1st Mar Div advance west of Yudam-ni while the 3d Inf Div protected its left flank, including the Hamhung-Hagaru MSR. The 7th Inf Div was to protect the right flank by placing one RCT on the east side of the Chosin Reservoir.

These plans were badly scrambled by the CCF counter-strokes. The 3d Inf Div, due to dispersion and administrative delays, was unable to carry out its assignment of protecting the MSR. Worse fortune befell the dispersed 7th Inf Div when the enemy cut to pieces the troops in

process of assembling east of the Reservoir.

Not all of these developments were apparent on 28 November. But it was a heavy and lonely burden of responsibility which fell that morning upon the shoulders of Gen Smith when he flew with his staff from Hungnam to establish his forward CP at Hagaru.

The urgency of the situation was emphasized by first reports of Marine casualties for 27 and 28 November, nearly all of which were borne by the 5th and 7th Regiments. These losses approximated a battalion in strength—a total of 1,094 which included 136 killed, 60 missing, 675 wounded, and 355 non-battle casualties.<sup>3</sup> The latter consisted largely of frostbite cases, some of which were restored to active duty shortly. Yet it was plain that the division would soon be bled white if attrition continued at this rate.

MARINE CHANCES OF SURVIVAL depended to a great extent on the lessons learned from the operations of the past four weeks. Mountain warfare and cold weather fighting had not been considered Corps specialties. But Marines prided themselves on adaptability, and a Marine regiment had been the first American outfit to fight it out with a large Chinese force. A whole Chinese division was chewed up by RCT-7 in the process, but a more far-reaching result was the evaluation of the new enemy's methods.

Col Homer L. Litzenberg, CO of RCT-7, not only studied CCF tactics but also tried out new Marine techniques to meet them. This graduate of the National War College had enlisted as a private in 1918 and worked his way up through the ranks. His World War II experience, divided between staff and line duty, had convinced him that the two were inseparable in a good infantry organization. And though Col Litzenberg considered himself a line specialist, he frequently shifted his officers from staff to line and back again.

Throughout the four-week advance from Hamhung to Yudam-ni the 7th Marines became virtually a traveling tactical laboratory. CCF tactics, it was observed, thrived on dispersion. One of the chief objects of enemy night attacks was to create this condition, if it did not already exist, by penetrations aiming to cut off an outpost, a platoon, or even a company.

Cohesion was the tactical remedy—cohesion making the most of superior firepower. Thus the 7th Marines adopted at all times a formation able to resist a surprise attack from front, flanks, or rear. This meant encamping in a tight perimeter and marching like a moving fortress. In either event, experience taught that a regimental formation must have a minimum depth of 3,000 yards and a maximum depth of 5,000 yards to provide all-around protection and mutual support. Patrols, consisting usu-

<sup>3</sup>As compared to the losses for these two days, the 1st Marine Division had a total of 1,503 (not counting a relatively small list of non-battle casualties) in the 22-day Inchon-Seoul operation.



<sup>2</sup>The amphibious landing at Inchon and the capture of Seoul were described in the July and August issues of the GAZETTE.

ally of a reinforced company, were seldom sent beyond the reach of supporting artillery fires.

Perimeter defenses, of course, were not a novelty in military history. Enormous "hedgehogs," manned by as many as 10 divisions, had been known on the Russian front in World War II. For that matter, American pioneers of a century ago had formed their covered wagons into a perimeter to resist Indian attacks. The theory was old, but in practice RCT-7 adapted it to mountain warfare and CCF tactics.

The results were sometimes astonishing. On one occasion when CG X Corps visited the front, he was fascinated by an RCT-7 perimeter enclosing 18 howitzers of the 11th Marines. Four or five patrols having been sent out that day, the muzzles of the pieces were pointed skyward for high-angle covering fires in all directions. Gen Almond gazed at the scene in silent wonder, and then he remarked, "It looks like an AAA battalion gone wild!"

Altogether, the experiments of RCT-7 enabled the entire 1st Mar Div to draw upon a fund of knowledge tested in the field against the new enemy. This knowledge was an invaluable asset on 28 November when Col Litzenberg invited LtCol Raymond L. Murray, CO 5th Marines, to confer with him at daybreak on plans for the emergency.

Col Murray, appointed a regimental commander for the Inchon-Seoul operation, had made a distinguished record as combat leader at Guadalcanal, Tarawa, and Saipan. He and Col Litzenberg, acting in council with their S-3s, agreed upon the necessity for a unified defense. Both regiments, they decided, were to be immediately pulled together into a perimeter enclosing the three battalions of the 11th Marines and other support and service units. Regimental lines meant nothing, and the spirit of unity was never better expressed than in the words of SSgt Alec B. Gault of the 7th Marines:

☛ "THAT WAS THE TIME when there was no outfit . . . you were a Marine, you were fighting with everybody. There was no more 5th and 7th; you were just one outfit, just fighting to get the hell out of there!"

The new perimeter measured about three miles from east to west, and a quarter of a mile less from north to south. In the northern half, occupied by RCT-5, the 2d, 3d, and 1st Bns were deployed from east to west in that order. RCT-7 was in position with Item and How Cos on the right or west flank, tied in with 2/5 on the right. On the left of How Co the three companies of 1/7 were deployed. Completing the perimeter was a provisional battalion of the 7th, composed of Easy, George, and Dog Cos. These units tied in with Baker Co on the west and 1/5 on the north.

The redeployment was carried out in the face of CCF attacks which were still being pressed against the northern sector of the perimeter. During the withdrawal a

radio dispatch from Gen Smith cancelled previous missions and directed the two regiments at Yudam-ni to remain on the defensive "until the present situation clarifies."

At dusk, Charlie Co of 1/7 was still pinned down south of Yudam-ni by CCF machine gun fire, and Able Co made a first unsuccessful attempt at rescue. It took a combined flanking movement by Baker Co and repeated air strikes to dislodge the enemy, so that the reunited 1st Bn got back to the new perimeter at 2130.

Four patrols were sent out on 30 November by division orders to clear the MSR. The relief of Fox Co of 2/7 was an added mission for the two patrols which moved out from Hagaru on the road to Yudam-ni. After a reinforced 3/1 platoon was stopped, elements of the 7th Marines in company strength were able to advance only two miles with the support of three tanks.

Another 3/1 platoon, pushing from Hagaru toward Koto-ri, was soon turned back by enemy fire. Meanwhile a motorized 2/1 column of company strength, preceded by four tanks, set out from Koto-ri toward Hagaru-ri. This force fought its way northward for four miles against increasing opposition, then had to give up the attempt.

☛ **THUS THE FOUR FORWARD POSITIONS** of the 1st Mar Div were still cut off from road communication with one another as the Leathernecks braced themselves to meet renewed attacks on the night of 28-29 November. The 5th and 7th Marines remained on the alert throughout the hours of darkness, but the ominous quiet was broken only by sporadic mortar fire and minor enemy contact on the northern side of the perimeter.

Apparently the enemy was content to keep the Marines at Yudam-ni surrounded while putting into effect the second phase of his plan—the tightening of pressure on the rear.

As a result Fox Co of 2/7 had another fight for survival on its lonely hilltop. At 0200 the whistles and bugles were heard again as the signal for enemy assault. Capt Barber was wounded in the leg but hobbled from platoon to platoon, directing the defense. His lightly wounded men also returned to the firing line after first aid. Remarkably accurate artillery fire from Hagaru enabled the perimeter to hold out until daybreak, when the Chinese retired to nearby hills as the Corsairs took charge.

At 0900, in response to division orders, a composite battalion set out from Yudam-ni for the purpose of relieving Fox Co. A rifle company each from 1/5, 1/7, and 3/7 composed the column, which met such heavy resistance south of Yudam-ni that it returned at 2100 to escape encirclement. Meanwhile an unsuccessful attempt to reinforce Fox Co from the other direction was made by elements of the 7th Marines remaining



Hagaru-ri. About halfway to Sinhung-ni this patrol of about 200 men was stopped by enemy fire, and air drops supplied the thinned company on the hilltop as it faced its third night of isolation.

By THIS TIME the MSR was infested with enemy as far south as the railhead at Chinhung-ni, where a patrol of 1/1 exchanged shots with a CCF platoon. Koto-ri, occupied by 2/1 and the regimental CP, had been under observation all day of the 29th by Chinese studying the defenses. Steep hills flanked the village on the west, but the terrain leveled out into a valley before rising gradually into another chain of hills to the east. The perimeter was most strongly defended west and north of the road, where Dog and Fox Cos formed a semicircle facing the hills. On the northeast side was Easy Co and the CP, the Div Recon Co, Easy Btry of the 11th Marines, and the 4.2 inch Mortar Co were found in that order from east to southeast. The valley on the south was lightly held by service and antitank troops (Map 2).

Taking charge with his usual gusto was a veteran whose career had inspired a hundred legends—Col Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller, the recipient of half a dozen wounds and even more decorations since enlisting as a private in 1918. Night attacks were no novelty to him, after years of campaigning in Haiti, Nicaragua, and the Pacific, and he prepared a warm reception when the enemy struck in battalion strength at dusk (Map 2).

Six mortar shells fell in the Easy Co area at 1745, followed by an assault on the northeast sector of the perimeter. Bugles and whistles shrieked as combat groups came on in short rushes with grenades and burp guns. A penetration was made for a few minutes in an Easy Co position, but none of the 17 Chinese ever lived to tell the tale. All were wiped out after infiltrating within 75 yards of the CP, and the lines held firm against further efforts. About midnight the enemy pulled back to the hills, leaving behind 150 to 175 bodies counted in front of 2/1 positions. Marine losses were reported as six killed and 16 wounded.

THIS REPULSE SEEMS to have convinced the enemy that Koto-ri would be a hard nut to crack, since there were no more large-scale assaults. Probing attacks continued, however, along with frequent patrol actions in the surrounding hills.

The major enemy effort on the night of the 29th was directed against the most vulnerable position on the MSR—the thinly held perimeter of 3/1 at Hagaru. With the unfinished airstrip and division CP to be protected, only two Marine rifle companies, two batteries of artillery, and miscellaneous support and service troops were available.

Hagaru, at the southern tip of the Chosin Reservoir, lay at the junction of the roads branching off to the east



ABOVE: 1st Mar Div strikes camp at Koto-ri for fight to the sea. BELOW: Patrol from B Co, 1st Marines guards CCF prisoners captured in fighting south of Koto-ri.



BELOW: A tank, with protecting infantry, moves toward Koto-ri during 1st Mar Div's breakout from the Reservoir.



and west sides of that body of water. East of the village a long ridge dominated the general area, while the airfield was commanded by a low elevation—high ground only in contrast to the strip itself—located just to the west.

A perimeter enclosing these two key terrain features was large enough to be defended by at least a reinforced regiment. LtCol Thomas L. Ridge, CO of 3/1, needed men desperately, but he did not stretch his thin lines to the extent of remaining weak everywhere. Instead, he used most of his strength for the protection of the two ridges, even at the risk of a breakthrough elsewhere. The defense of the airstrip was entrusted to 3/1 (less George Co, on detached duty), while the east ridge was the responsibility of Weapons Co of the 7th Marines plus elements of the 1st Eng Bn and other support and service troops (Map 3).

Inadequate numbers could not have been better disposed, for the three all-out CCF attacks fell upon these two positions. The enemy, departing from his usual infiltrating tactics, attempted to smash through the perimeter by sheer weight. At 2230 the first effort was directed against the 3/1 positions on the high ground west of the airstrip. Howitzers, mortars, and machine guns could not mow down the attackers fast enough, and How Co was overrun. A weird scene ensued as screaming Chinese slashed at tents and sleeping bags, searching for plunder. This disorder gave How Co the opportunity to reorganize and launch a counterattack at 0230 which restored the broken lines.

AN EVEN MORE SERIOUS SITUATION resulted from the CCF assault on the ridge east of town. So few were Col Ridge's numbers that only a jutting nose and a portion of the reverse slope could be manned. The first enemy onslaught swept the Marines off everywhere save for the nose at the southeastern end. Division Hqs was stripped of all available personnel, including clerks and cooks, to be thrown in as reinforcements. And though the Marines could not recover lost ground, their mortar and artillery fire kept the enemy from gaining the crest of the ridge.

A final CCF effort was launched at 0300 against Item Co positions west of the airfield. Four enemy waves were hurled back, and at daybreak the perimeter still held at every vital spot as air strikes were added to artillery fires. Reinforcements arrived on the night of the 29th, moreover, when the remnants of two companies fought their way through from Koto-ri.

These troops were part of the column known as Task Force Drysdale. Named after LtCol Douglas B. Drysdale, CO of the 41st Royal Marine Commando, the force also included George Co of 3/1 and a company of the 31st Inf of the 7th Inf Div. The 270 British Marines and the Army company had been sent from Hamhung to



5th and 7th Marines at Yudam-ni prepare to cut their way back to Hagaru through five to seven Chinese divisions.

Koto-ri by Col Forney, senior X Corps officer in the area, and George Co was rejoining its battalion after detached duty. These units, supported by two companies of the 1st Tank Bn, were deemed sufficient for two-fold mission—the reinforcing of the perimeter Hagaru, and the escorting of a large truck convoy of much-needed supplies.

Task Force Drysdale, organized by Col Puller, represented the greatest effort yet made to clear part of the MSR. On the morning of 29 November the infantry advanced two miles against small-arms fire, then halted until mid-afternoon to await the arrival of the two tank companies. One of them was placed in front and the other in the rear as the column continued toward Hagaru.

The halfway point had been reached when the infantry elements were held up by intense small-arms and automatic fire from an estimated three enemy battalions. When our tanks stopped to return the fire, the whole column ground to a halt, so that the thin-skinned vehicles became sitting ducks for enemy mortar shells. Several trucks were set on fire and others added to the confusion by attempting to turn about in the narrow road and withdraw.

The tanks reported at 1615 that further movement toward Hagaru was inadvisable. But after receipt of a message from CG 1st Mar Div that reinforcements were urgently needed, the head of the column pushed





against stiffening opposition. Most of the British Marines and George Co of 3/1, led by a tank company, finally managed to fight their way through to Hagaru at a cost of about 70 casualties and 17 vehicles.

The rear of the column, supported by the other tank company, had meanwhile turned back toward Koto-ri. Enemy efforts to cut off these troops made it necessary to dig in for the night and call for artillery fires from Koto-ri. In the morning, however, the men resumed their march and reached the 2/1 perimeter without further difficulty.

The separation of the forward and rear elements left the middle of the column, consisting largely of supply vehicles, isolated nearly halfway to Hagaru at dusk on the 29th. Marine service

troops, fighting alongside soldiers of the 31st Inf and a few British Marines, took cover in a roadside ditch as the enemy swarmed out of hills on the right of the road. Daring and effective Marine close air support enabled the outweighed force to beat off repeated CCF attacks made with automatic and mortar fire. Then under cover of darkness the enemy achieved several penetrations and swept around both flanks.

The hopeless struggle lasted until dawn, when defenders, thinned by losses and running out of ammunition, had little choice but to consider CCF terms. The sufferings of the wounded, sheltered only by a frozen ditch, hastened the reluctant decision of ranking officers to surrender. For the Chinese offered to allow all wounded to return to their own lines or await friendly transportation. About 130 captives remained in the enemy's hands—the largest CCF bag of prisoners during the entire Reservoir operation.<sup>4</sup> Seizures of equipment were even more impressive, since most of the supply trucks had been in the middle of the column.

The losses of Task Force Drysdale had been heavy,

<sup>4</sup>Escaped prisoners agreed that they were not treated brutally on the whole, though forced to share the privations and squalor of a coolie's life. Chinese moderation owed less to humanitarian motives than a belief that the Americans could be converted to Communism. This delusion resulted in the prisoners being spared for a tiresome period of indoctrination.

yet the attempt could not be written off as a failure. Considering the critical situation at Hagaru, it was perhaps a decisive gain to have reinforced that perimeter with a Marine rifle company and British Marines in nearly company strength.

Col Ridge's lines were still perilously stretched, and seldom have so many diverse elements been included in such a small force. No less than 24 separate units were represented—Army and Navy, as well as Marine—British and South Korean, as well as American—in an assortment which fought with the cohesion of veterans. The first Chinese attacks came in at least division strength, and enemy dead were counted or estimated at about 1,500 up to the night of the 29th. Yet in spite of this stout resistance, the critical ridge line extending 1,000 yards east of Hagaru was still a no-man's-land controlled largely by the enemy.

OUR TROOPS held little more than the nose of the ridge at darkness on the 29th when the weary reinforcements of Task Force Drysdale went into action shortly after arrival. George Co of 3/1 counterattacked to regain some of the ground lost in this sector. The attempt was successful, despite stubborn CCF resistance with grenades and machine gun fire. Thus at 2345, when the enemy attacked, the newly-won high ground put the Leathernecks in a better position. Mortar shells and artillery fire from How Btry, 11th Marines, helped to work another fearful slaughter on CCF troops who came up the draws where they had been cut down the night before. This time the Chinese effort was supported by artillery as well as mortars, but only six enemy soldiers managed to survive Marine firepower and penetrate into the perimeter, where they were killed by small arms. An estimated 400 to 600 of their comrades died in the draws which channeled the CCF attack.

The imperturbability of Gen Smith became an inspiring legend to headquarters and service troops taking the part of infantry. When a CCF mortar shell struck a fence behind the CP and blew it sky-high, the commanding general kept on writing at his table. Later that night, at the height of the Chinese attack, a burst of enemy ma-





Icy mountain passes, Chinese Communist attacks, and below zero weather put men and equipment to severe test.

chine gun fire sent bullets cracking through the thin walls overhead. The tall, slender general, gray-haired and distinguished of appearance, continued to smoke his pipe without noticing the nervousness of staff officers who were anxious as to his safety. Not until another mortar shell removed a large section of the roof did he relieve taut nerves by suggesting a move to a new CP. Otherwise, explained Gen Smith gravely, everyone would run the risk of catching cold in a room so excessively ventilated.

On the last night of the month the enemy made a final effort to crack the defense at Hagaru. The attack on the east ridge was combined with an attempt to seize the high ground dominating the airfield. Col Ridge had few enough reserves at his disposal, but all had to be thrown into the fight. The Chinese decided their own fate by channeling the main attacks in the same familiar draws, so that Marine supporting arms reaped another grim harvest. Even so, the defenders lost ground temporarily at several points, though all positions were restored before 0800 by counterattacks.

Thus ended the fourth consecutive night in which the enemy, despite his great numerical advantage, failed to take a single critical 1st Mar Div position. All four forward perimeters had been attacked repeatedly at an enormous cost in casualties. Yet the Chinese had nothing to show for their losses except a few temporary penetrations which could not withstand Marine counterattacks. Even Fox Co of the 7th, cut off from the rest of the division, was able to deal with assaults which diminished in intensity on the third and fourth nights.

"We had the feeling at all times that we had the upper hand," Gen Smith has been quoted as saying, "and that we were giving the enemy a beating whenever he chose to fight."

Some unorthodox methods had been adopted now and then in a pinch. Generally speaking, however, the successful defense of the four forward perimeters was a vindication of "war according to the book." Supporting weapons were combined and used correctly as a rule, and the resulting firepower frustrated an enemy willing to pay a high price in blood for his gains.

Even when the Marine command introduced seemingly novel techniques, they were seldom radical departures from the book. More often they were simply the old tested methods adapted to a new enemy and new conditions of terrain and weather.

Paradoxically, if there was anything radical about Marine thought, it was the conservatism which led to preparations for trouble at a time of optimism in high state and military circles. On 15 November, when two other X Corps divisions were racing unopposed to the border, Gen Smith was concentrating his units and thinking in sober terms of logistics. For it was not mere coincidence that four days later the first tanks and heavy vehicles were on the way to Hagaru. This was the achievement of the 1st Eng Bn, which had been providing drainage, widening curves, installing culverts, and building up shoulders to bear heavy traffic. Immediately on the advice of Col Litzenberg, supplies of all kinds were trucked from the Chinhung-ni railhead to the dumps at Koto-ri and Hagaru.

❁ **THUS IF THE 1ST MAR DIV** was the only large American unit to be relatively prepared when the Chinese counterstroke fell, much of the credit is due to the foresight of its command. Gen Smith did not depend on truck transport alone. Next, he assigned the Marine engineers the task of building a C-47 strip at Hagaru for the purpose of making the division partially independent of the MSR.

Begun on 18 November, the runway was only 40 per cent finished when the first plane landed 12 days later. So urgent was the need for haste that on this occasion the book had to be thrown out of the window. For the length of the strip was only 2,900 feet instead of the prescribed minimum of 6,000, and the 5 per cent grade was exactly two and a half times as much as the maximum allowed by the manuals.

The courage of the fliers who made those first landings was matched by that of the Marine engineers who worked under floodlights, exposed to sniper fire, on nights when the Hagaru perimeter was in peril. Much of the power of the dozers had to be expended on ground frozen hard as concrete. Ridding the blade of the frozen earth which adhered was almost as much of a problem as finishing it. These were some of the problems encountered by specialists who also took their part in the fire fights in perimeter defense.

The afternoon of 1 December, when the first C-



landed, dated an end to the isolation of the 1st Mar Div. For the plane took off successfully with 24 Marine wounded—the first of those hundreds of casualties who would owe their lives to evacuation by air.

No longer could it be said that the Leathernecks were out at the end of a strategic limb. For this date also marks the first air drop of supplies on a large enough scale for most of a division's needs. The 1st Mar Air Delivery Plat at Yonpo Airfield had only a few C-47s and C-119s at its disposal. Thus the brunt fell upon the Combat Cargo Command of the 5th Air Force in Japan. Prepackaged "Baldwin" units designed to supply a battalion for a day were dropped, but more often requests were filled for supplies not conforming to this specification. Some idea of the amounts may be gained from the requests for ammunition alone made by Fox Co of RCT-7 during its five days and nights of isolation:

Small arms—105,000 rounds; 60mm—800 rounds; 81mm—1,100 rounds; 105mm—500 rounds; grenades—5,850.

The defenders of the Hagaru perimeter requested 1,466,740 rounds of small-arms ammunition, 15,168 rounds of 60mm, 8544 rounds of 81mm, 2,160 rounds of 105mm howitzer, 10,350 grenades, 46,000 "C" rations, 11,660 gallons of gasoline, and 200 miles of wire.

Altogether, requests for 1949 tons of supplies were put in by the four forward perimeters. Breakage and damage accounted for a high percentage of loss, especially with the heavy ammunition. But even allowing for this debit, the breakout of the 1st Mar Div owed in large measure to a daily schedule of airborne supply and evacuation of casualties. It also owed to a Marine command which had provided a reserve, while the MSR was still open, of two units of fire and six days' rations at Hagaru. For this was the margin of safety which

proved to be necessary on several occasions when air drops were not sufficient.

Supply problems loomed large on the afternoon of 30 November when Gen Almond flew to Hagaru. Col Forney had so impressed him with the seriousness of the situation that he ordered an immediate withdrawal from the Reservoir area. CG 1st Mar Div was authorized to destroy the bulk of his equipment as a preliminary, being promised supply by air drops along the route.

All elements of the 7th Inf Div north of Sudong in the Reservoir area were placed under operational control of Gen Smith at this conference. A battalion each from the 31st and 32d Infantry and the 57th FA Bn had been attacked and severely punished while in process of assembling east of the Reservoir. Col Allen D. MacClean, CO 31st Infantry, was killed at the head of troops consisting largely of South Koreans recruited under the "buddy system."<sup>5</sup>

Gen Smith ordered RCT-31 elements to move to Hagaru on 1 December, but after covering 5,000 yards the column was cut to pieces by enemy attack. Before nightfall some 300 survivors of the disaster, some of them wounded or suffering from frostbite, drifted singly or in groups across the frozen reservoir. LtCol Olin L. Beall and a group of Marine volunteers conducted daring first-aid operations on the ice in jeeps and sleds. Curiously enough, the Chinese did not fire on the Army

<sup>5</sup>This was the system under which several Army divisions were brought up to combat strength in the summer of 1950. South Korean recruits, issued a U. S. uniform and equipment, were hastily trained by American "buddies" to fill gaps in the ranks.



wounded, though they showed no such consideration for Marine rescuers.

Army stragglers continued to make their way to Hagaru during the next two days, and many were picked up by a task force sent out for that purpose in company strength. After hundreds of casualties had been evacuated by air, about 450 soldiers were issued Marine equipment and formed into a provisional battalion.

This interlude was not allowed to interfere with the event which further distinguishes 1 December as a turning point—the seizing of the initiative by the 1st Mar Div. For four days and nights the Chinese had been able to choose the time and place of attack. They had been able to keep the division split up into five groups with their road blocks. But this phase ended at 2100 on 1 December when a single battalion initiated the advance out of the Yudam-ni area. The Marines were coming out fighting, and henceforward the Chinese would have little choice but to take the defensive!

Planning was done jointly by the two regimental commanders, Col Litzenberg and Col Murray, who agreed on a procedure approved on 30 November by CG 1st Mar Div. The problem was stark in its simplicity—how were two depleted Marine regiments, burdened with some 750 casualties, to fight their way through mountain country held by an estimated five to seven CCF divisions? These regiments, moreover, must find a way to relieve Fox Co of the 7th, holding out for the fourth day on its hill-top (Map 4).

THE SOLUTION was based on the agreement of the planners that the 4,000-foot pass near Shinhung-ni was the key terrain feature. It must be held at all costs if the 5th and 7th Regts were to cut their way back to Hagaru. Acting on this premise, the commanding officers decided to employ the ancient and potent weapon of surprise. This was to be put into effect by sending LtCol Raymond G. Davis, CO of 1/7, to seize the mountain pass and relieve Fox Co. In order to catch the enemy napping, the planners ordered Col Davis and his battalion to strike out directly across trackless and snow-drifted mountains—a route which imposed too many hardships even for Chinese guerrillas.

Before 1/7 moved out from the Yudam-ni area on 1 December, a dangerous redeployment remained to be completed by both regiments. As a preliminary to their advance toward Hagaru, both had to be pulled back from the valley running northwest of Yudam-ni to the larger valley south of town. Not only did the position offer more security, but it was astride the road leading toward Hagaru.

Despite the risks, the planners decided to make the attempt in daylight hours, when they had the advantages of observation for air and artillery. The movement was executed by a unit at a time, beginning with the artillery,

the command installations, and others elements which were to be protected. As the infantry battalions withdrew under cover of air and artillery, each was assigned to its position. The flanks of the new perimeter were about 3,500 yards apart, each resting on high ground, and the width ranged from 2,000 to 2,500 yards. The critical moment came when 1/5, the last battalion of all, retired from a ridge north of Yudam-ni. Swarms of CCF troops followed, and an all-out attack seemed imminent. Then the Chinese were so diverted by heaps of rubbish that they succumbed to the lure of petty plunder.

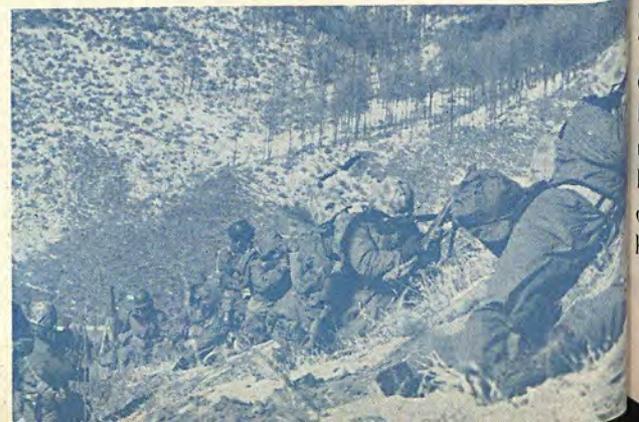
The day's work did not end with the occupation of the new perimeter. It was further necessary to seize the high ground south of Yudam-ni to provide artillery positions covering the fighting withdrawal. In order to secure these objectives, Col Davis's men took part along with How Co of 3/7 in a fight which lasted most of the day. Then the weary Leathernecks set out after darkness on their famous march across the crests of the mountains.

All night the parka-clad men stumbled through drifts and climbed over boulders. At 15 degrees below zero the wind howled through this wasteland, snatching away the very breaths of Leathernecks ready to collapse with exhaustion. In several instances the ordeal was more than men could endure, so that two of them lost their minds and had to be bound. Both died within 24 hours.

After crossing three ridges, all hands were staggering with fatigue when Col Davis called a halt at 0100 for rest. The enemy opened up with long-distance machine gun fire, but the Leathernecks lay motionless in the snow where they had dropped with packs on their backs. Too weary to care, too weary even to recognize their own platoon leaders, they had to be roused by officers and non-coms who were scarcely in full possession of their own faculties. Col Davis himself checked every decision with his officers, he related afterwards, in order to be sure that his tired brain was functioning accurately.

The Marines finally got to their feet and opened fire which kept the enemy at a respectful distance. And at daybreak the column lurched forward again, carrying out its dead and wounded while receiving CCF snipers' arms and automatic fire from four directions. Col Davis sent one company ahead to clear the way, while the other three watched the flanks and rear.

#### Marines build up firing line to hold off CCF flank attack





Marines set up machine gun on rocky hillside to fire on Communist roadblock holding up advance of main body.

Communication was established with Fox Co at dawn. It was not meant in a spirit of bravado when those beleaguered Leathernecks offered to send out a patrol to guide their relief. But Col Davis needed no assistance to reach the perimeter at 1125 on 2 December, and that afternoon he completed his mission by securing the mountain pass.

Meanwhile the two regiments had moved out of Yudam-ni at 0900 with an M-26 leading the way. It was the single tank which had managed to come by road from Hagaru, after three others failed, while the MSR was still open. Col Litzenberg learned that it had been left at Yudam-ni, locked and deserted, when its crew was recalled just before the CCF counterstroke. He requested that another crew be sent to him by helicopter, and the lone tank played a prominent part in the withdrawal by attacking roadblocks.

No riders were allowed on the vehicles except wounded men and essential personnel, for the dead had been buried before departing Yudam-ni. All able-bodied men were needed to defend the column as 3/5 led the way, attacking astride the road, while 3/7 covered the right flank, and 1/5 had responsibility for the left. These units swept forward to secure the high ground on both sides until the vehicles passed, then pushed ahead to repeat the performance.

Although the planners made no pretensions to clairvoyance, Col Litzenberg and Col Murray foresaw nearly every CCF move. They reasoned that the Chinese would also recognize the importance of the mountain pass and strive to stop the column at this point. Acting on this premise, they prepared a trap by sending 1/7, after it linked up with Fox Co, to ride herd on large CCF forces occupying a ridge running northwest from the road. Three other rifle companies were posted to cut off escape on the afternoon of 2 December while Marine artillery fires drove the enemy toward the main column. At this moment Col Litzenberg gave the word for the slaughter by remarking to Col Murray: "Ray, notify your battalion commander that the Chinese are running southwest into his arms!"

Progress was slow that night, but on the morning of 3 December the vehicle column started through the pass as 1/7 became advance guard and 3/7 relieved 2/5 at the rear. "Objective Hagaru" had been the order for a march which had no intermediate objectives, and the head of the column entered the perimeter at 1900 on the 3d. No serious losses of equipment resulted from enemy action, but 14 of the howitzers had to be destroyed by the Marines themselves when the tractors drawing them were disabled for lack of diesel fuel.

The leading troops had taken 59 hours and the rear element required about 20 hours longer. Thus an average of less than a quarter of a mile an hour was maintained by men who had no rest save during intervals when a roadblock held up progress.

Never throughout the march had the column been without artillery fires from the three battalions of the 11th Marines. This regiment also provided gunners to serve as infantry in the depleted ranks of RCT-7 rifle companies, two of which had been reduced by casualties to fewer than a hundred men each.

☛ SUPERB AIR SUPPORT of all kinds, moreover, helped immeasurably to see the 5th and 7th through to Hagaru. Until 2 December the 5th Air Force was nominally in control, but after that date the 1st Mar Air Wing, commanded by MajGen Field Harris, was given responsibility for providing close air support for X Corps. The three squadrons of MAG 12 were then operating from Wonsan, while MAG 33 had two squadrons at Yonpo and one on a CVE carrier. Squadrons were shifted about frequently during the following week, but the 1st Mar Air Wing remained in control until 11 December.

Navy planes from carriers of Task Force 77 also took an active part in maintaining air support which was exceptional both in quality and quantity. Between 1 and 11 December the Marines alone flew 1730 sorties, averaging about 123 a day. Meanwhile the planes of the 5th Air Force flew interdiction missions beyond a bomb line approximately five miles on either side of the MSR.

Staff officers at Hagaru never forgot the spectacle when the advance guard of the 5th and 7th entered the perimeter. Bearded Leathernecks in parkas, some of them walking wounded, plodded along with fatigue-glazed eyes. The more seriously wounded were tied to the rear seats of bullet-riddled jeeps, and stretchers had even been lashed across the hoods. Trucks with top-heavy loads of tentage gave the column the look of a Gypsy caravan, but the hungry and exhausted men were carrying themselves with the pride of Marines.

They had found General Winter almost as implacable an enemy as the Chinese. Men wearing shoe pacs had been unable to change to dry socks under combat conditions, and frostbitten feet were often the result. Hundreds

of other Marines were suffering from digestive ills caused by a diet of frozen "C" rations.

Plans had been made at Hagaru to serve hot meals and guide the newcomers to warming tents in assigned billeting areas. Evacuation of wounded and frostbite casualties began the next morning, and about 1,000 from the 5th and 7th Marines were flown out before nightfall to base hospitals in Japan. During the past three days some 1750 casualties—most of them Army troops straggling in after the defeats east of the Reservoir—had already been evacuated from the unfinished airstrip at Hagaru. The total was to be raised to 4675 on 9 December by C-47 and C-119 pilots who never had a fatal accident. Of this total, 3532 were Marines and the balance U. S. Army personnel.

☛ DURING THESE EVACUATIONS no major attacks were made on the Hagaru perimeter, though sniping continued and the airstrip itself was only a few hundred yards from enemy outposts. This lull was typical of CCF operations. For it had also been the experience of the 5th and 7th Marines that CCF aggressiveness wilted after a few good beatings. Chinese combat groups, in short, were committed to a plan of repeated night attacks allowing no options or alternatives. They persisted, regardless of losses, as long as they retained cohesion and fighting strength. When reduced beyond this point by casualties, the remnants seemed incapable of doing anything except withdrawing for long-distance sniping activities.

Four CCF regiments of the 58th and 59th divisions, numbering originally some 15,000 men, had been punished at Hagaru until they ceased to be effective units. The defense of the perimeter and airstrip was one of the decisive operations of the breakout, and Col Ridge declared that he could not "recall a single historic military occasion where such diverse units, of which the majority were non-combat type troops, withstood determined and almost continuous attacks by an overwhelming numerically superior enemy for such a period."

Planning for the attack of the entire 1st Mar Div southward from Hagaru to Koto-ri was based on the tactics which the 5th and 7th Marines had used so effectively. Again the key terrain features on both sides of the road were to be secured first, so that the vehicle column could proceed with flank protection. RCT-7 was to lead the advance at first light on 6 December, while RCT-5 took responsibility for the defense of Hagaru and the rear of the departing column (Map 5).

Division vehicles were to be organized into Trains No. 1 and 2, under control of RCT-7 and RCT-5 respectively. All personnel except drivers and a few others designated by unit commanders were to walk, thus providing close-in protection.

Although CG X Corps had authorized the destruction

of equipment, Gen Smith decided to come out with everything needed for a fighting withdrawal, including stoves and tentage. Even the spare rifles taken from casualties were sent out by air, along with 10 plane loads of salvaged parachutes.

All 1st Mar Div casualties had been evacuated and the remaining troops comparatively rested when RCT-7 led the way out of Hagaru on the morning of 6 December. While 2/7 advanced astride the road with a platoon of tanks, 1/7 protected the right flank and the provisional Army battalion had responsibility for the left. Near the end of the vehicle train, 3/7 followed to guard against rear attacks.

At 0700, on the crest of the first ridge, C Co of 1/7 surprised a CCF platoon sleeping in foxholes and wiped it out to a man. Throughout the day the column was under almost constant automatic and mortar fire from enemy combat groups defending roadblocks or flanking ridges in platoon to company strength. Marine progress was slow because of the frequent halts while the infantry cleared the flanks so that the train of about 1000 vehicles could go forward. During the night the enemy cut the column in two, and some close range fighting resulted before infiltrating CCF troops were killed. Further delay resulted from two blown bridges, one of which was repaired and the other by-passed.

Meanwhile RCT-5 had launched a rearguard attack on Hagaru, supported by 76 planes, to clear the enemy from a key height east of the village. The regiment moved out that night to fight its way against stiff resistance, despite the fact that the first column had just been over the road.

The leading elements of RCT-7 made contact with the 2d Bn of RCT-1 at 0900 on 7 December, and the last troops of RCT-5 reached Koto-ri that night. Marine engineers, working under floodlights, lengthened the airstrip of this perimeter until C-47s managed to land precariously the next day. Several hundred more casualties were evacuated from Koto-ri by planes which brought ammunition to supplement air drops made by the C-119s. Thus the 1st Mar Div moved out of Koto-ri on the morning of 8 December with two days' rations and two units of fire, while the addition of RCT-1 vehicles brought the total in the train up to 1400.

☛ GEN SMITH AND HIS STAFF retained essentially the same plan of attack (Map 6). This time, however, two battalions of RCT-1 were to hold Koto-ri until the other two regiments cleared. The 1st Bn of RCT-1 was meanwhile to fight its way from Chinhung-ni up the "hump" to seize commanding ground about halfway to Koto-ri and hold it until the arrival of the advance guard of RCT-7. This move was made possible when the Marines at Chinhung-ni were relieved by elements of the 3d Div, sent from Hamhung by X Corps orders.

An estimated six CCF divisions stood in the path of the 1st Mar Div from Hagaru southward, and 3/7 met fierce resistance immediately after the jumpoff when assaulting its first objective. The hardest fight of all, however, fell to the lot of 1/1 in its attack up the mountain from Chinhung-ni. Clawing their way forward through a blinding snowstorm, these Marines took such heavy losses that they were forced to dig in for the night just short of their objective. As a further check, the enemy had destroyed a 29-foot section of bridge about a third of the way down the mountain from Koto-ri on the shelf of a cliff which could not be by-passed. Thus it was not certain that the vehicle column could proceed next day.

THE OUTLOOK WAS THE MORE GLOOMY because the C-119s had made a successful drop on 7 December of six Treadway bridge sections for repairs. Enemy opposition had prevented the new span from being installed, and on the night of the 8th there was the threat of continued snow to cut down the Marine close air support which had been so effective.

The spirits of the Leathernecks were lifted immeasurably in the morning, therefore, when the sun shone through the clouds upon a world of clean, glittering new snow. Soon the Corsairs were roaring back into action again to help 1/1 secure its key objective. And it took LtCol John F. Partridge and his engineers only three hours that afternoon to install the Treadway bridge so that the vehicles could proceed.

The precaution of placing the tanks in the rear proved to be wise when the seventh from the end ran athwart of the road after its brakes locked. Efforts to bypass it or push it out of the way were unsuccessful, and the last seven tanks had to be disabled when the enemy closed with mortar fire and thermite grenades. The tankmen fought on foot in a hot action which resulted in a CCF repulse, and air strikes completed the job of destroying the abandoned machines.

This was the only grievous loss of equipment on the last lap of the breakout. On the other hand, Col Puller's regiment actually came out with more vehicles than it brought in, what with salvaging some abandoned Army trucks.

On the morning of the 10th the advance troops of the 7th Marines moved out of Chinhung-ni, arriving by truck convoy that afternoon at Hamhung, where hot food and warming tents awaited them. Not until 1300 on the 11th did the last elements of the division clear the railhead, and the final fire fight of the breakout occurred near Sudong when Col Puller's regimental train fought off an ambush with the loss of eight men killed, 21 wounded, and eight vehicles.

That night the men of the 1st Mar Div had their first sleep in two weeks that was completely free from the



threat of enemy attack. There remained the problem of evacuating the four divisions of X Corps and thousands of Korean refugees from Hungnam, but it was enough for the moment that the Leathernecks had cut their way to safety.

The thoughts of American newspaper readers and radio listeners had been fixed on these men with mingled hope and dread. Thus the Marines at Hamhung were astonished and even embarrassed by the extravagant degree of hero worship accorded them. For they knew that no "miracles" had brought the division through from Yudam-ni and Hagaru. They knew that this result had been achieved by tactical system and method which gave every PFC confidence in his command and leadership. The Marines, in short, not only outfought the enemy, they also outthought him at every step of the way.

Not all of the Leathernecks, of course, got back to Hamhung. But those who were privileged to live could never forget the mass burials which took place in all four main perimeters. Marine losses from 27 November to 11 December amounted to a total of 7350—541 killed, 182 missing, 2972 wounded, and 3655 non-battle casualties. Enemy losses for the same period were estimated at a total of 37,500—15,000 killed and 7500 wounded by Marine ground forces, plus 10,000 killed and 5000 wounded by Marine air strikes.

Some flattering tributes were paid the division by the stateside press after the "deliverance of the survivors." It is quite likely, however, that the Leathernecks themselves would have preferred the comment written in a letter a few days later by their commanding general.

"These men," declared Gen Smith, "were delivered through their own efforts. They came out as a fighting division, not as 'survivors.' I do not think the thought of failure ever entered anybody's head." US MC

*Next Month: The Hungnam Evacuation—  
Amphibious Landing in Reverse.*



# THE HUNGNAM EVACUATION

## Amphibious Landing in Reverse

*By Lynn Montross*

Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps



HUNGNAM

# THE HUNGNAM EVACUATION

## Amphibious Landing in Revers

Samchok

Ulsan

Pusan

THE NIGHT OF 11 DECEMBER 1950 WAS A MEMORABLE one for the Leathernecks in the warming tents at Hamhung. For the first time in two weeks they had an opportunity to renew their acquaintance with hot food, sleep, security, and a much-needed shave.

These were the men of the 1st Mar Div who had been making front-page headlines in the world press. Since 27 November, when the great Chinese Communist counteroffensive exploded in the X Corps zone, they had fought their way for 56 miles through overwhelming enemy forces.

But the end was not yet in sight. In spite of recent sub-zero temperatures, it might figuratively have been said that the Marines had jumped from the frying pan into the fire. Hamhung could offer them only a breathing spell. The entire Chosin Reservoir breakout, in fact, might prove to be a prelude to the test awaiting in the Hungnam port area.

The new overall problem was staggering. CinCFE orders called for the immediate evacuation and redeployment of the 1st Mar Div and the other four divisions of X Corps. This meant that more than 100,000 troops must be assembled and embarked under the noses of the Chinese forces. Thousands of vehicles and mountains of equipment must be outloaded from a small Korean port, and the difficulties were compounded by a host of friendly Korean civilian refugees who could scarcely be abandoned to the tender mercies of the Communists.

No such large-scale movement of combined Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine elements had been contemplated since Okinawa. The time was so short, moreover, that action could not always wait on detailed planning and organization. In any event the job had to be done.

Even without the danger of enemy interference, the swift-paced Hungnam evacuation would have caused many a headache as an administrative problem. But it could not be supposed, of course, that the enemy would neglect any military advantage. On the contrary, 1st Mar Div intelligence warned on 10 December that "sizeable" Chinese forces were gathering along the former MSR in the Marine rear. Although 1st Mar Div ground and air forces had inflicted an estimated 37,500 casualties in the past two weeks, the CCF invaders seemed to have endless reserves. Marine air observation revealed "continued movement southward to reinforce, with the presence of a considerable number of artillery pieces reported for the first time."

Despite the punishment taken by the enemy, his combat efficiency and morale at the finish of the Marine breakout were rated by Division G-2 as "good to excellent." CCF capabilities were believed to include two courses of action which might affect the Hungnam evacuation. One was the mounting of "large-scale, coordinated attacks against the Hamhung-Hungnam area at

In cooperation with the Historical Division, Headquarters U. S. Marine Corps, the GAZETTE herewith presents another in a series of official accounts dealing with Marine operations in Korea. Prepared by writers and researchers of the Historical Division, these articles are based on available records and reports from units in Korea. Also to be treated in this series:

Anti-Guerrilla Operations in South Korea  
The Drive to the 38th Parallel

Publication is scheduled for consecutive monthly issues.

Admittedly it is too soon to write a definitive history of Marine fighting in Korea. Not only are enemy sources lacking, but even Marine and Army records are still incomplete. Articles of the length to be used in the GAZETTE, moreover, do not allow space for more than an outline of operations which will ultimately be given the detailed treatment of a monograph.

But timeliness is also an end to be sought, and these preliminary narratives are based on Marine and Army reports received up to this time. These articles are presented in the hope that GAZETTE readers will feel free to add to the incomplete record. This is an invitation, therefore, for you to supplement the existing record. Send your comments and criticism, as well as any other information you can make available, to the Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, Washington 25, D. C.

any time with an estimated six to eight CCF divisions supported by an undetermined amount of artillery and armor." The other, which held even more serious implications, was that the Communists might launch "large-scale air attacks."

Either of these threats was disturbing at a time when the roads leading to Hungnam would soon be choked with troops and vehicles. So far the Chinese had not challenged the United Nations air supremacy, but it was conceivable that this might be the next great surprise of an unpredictable conflict. After all, there was no logical reason why Soviet planes should not be made available to the enemy as well as Soviet artillery and tanks.

Nor could the morale factor be overlooked. Today, glancing back with the infallible wisdom of hindsight, it is hard to recapture the atmosphere of shock and confusion which then prevailed. In a few incredible November days a Chinese Communist counterstroke had wrecked Gen Douglas A. MacArthur's "end the war" offensive. The U. S. Eighth Army was hurled back in Northwest Korea after a ROK corps disintegrated on the right flank. Then the enemy struck his next surprise blow in the X Corps zone, where five divisions were strung out all the way from Wonsan to the Manchurian border.

Eight CCF divisions fell upon the 1st Mar Div, spearheading the X Corps advance in the Chosin Reservoir area, and another UN disaster appeared to be in the making.<sup>1</sup> Stateside newspaper readers watched the head-

<sup>1</sup>The 1st Mar Div landing at Wonsan and operations leading up to the Chosin Reservoir breakout were described in the October and November issues of the MARINE CORPS GAZETTE.

by Lynn Montross

lines in dread of the Marines being trapped and destroyed. But the Marines came out fighting. The Marines snatched the initiative from a numerically superior foe and cut a path to the sea.

Students of history were reminded of Xenophon and his Ten Thousand fighting their way to another sea through another host of Orientals.<sup>2</sup> Twenty-four centuries had gone by since then, and weapons had progressed from catapults to howitzers. Yet the principles of sound warfare had changed but little, and the Marines were not unworthy of the comparison. The Marines, too, had both command and leadership. The Marines showed a classical precision in making the most of their training and weapons. The Marines were armed with the confidence which comes from the victories of method and system over locust tactics.

It was not the first time that the 1st Mar Div had restored American public faith at a moment of doubt and bewilderment. In 1942 the outfit had the distinction of deflating a Japanese superman legend which had been blown up since Pearl Harbor. For the Leathernecks slugged it out the hard way on Guadalcanal to crush a foe with a reputation for invincibility in jungle warfare.

☛ HISTORY REPEATED ITSELF eight years later when the 1st Mar Div stormed ashore at Inchon on 15 September 1950 to puncture a legend of North Korean prowess. And on 11 December, when the Anabasis of the Leathernecks ended in the warming tents of Hamhung, the 1st Mar Div had demonstrated that the military coolies of Red China could be repeatedly beaten. Stateside radio commentators and editorial writers explained the breakout in terms of a "miracle," but the Marines knew better. The Marines knew that they had won over Communist bulk and fanaticism with nothing more miraculous than good home-made "war according to the book."

There was the danger afterwards that American public opinion might swing back to overconfidence. But before this reaction had time to develop, another crisis threatened in Northeast Korea when X Corps was ordered to

<sup>2</sup>For the enlightenment of readers who may have forgotten their classics, Xenophon commanded a force of Greek mercenaries in a Persian civil war of the 4th Century, B. C. The defeat of their employers leaving them stranded in hostile territory, the immortal Ten Thousand fought their way through swarming Asiatic forces to safety. Xenophon recorded the history of this breakout in his *Anabasis*.

begin the Hungnam evacuation.

The merest layman might have perceived that any such operation would take a great deal of doing. It was tribute to the Navy, however, that the prompt accomplishment of its mission was assumed as a matter of course by officers of other branches.

☛ IN KEEPING WITH THIS TRADITION, the Navy had already been planning and preparing on a basis of possibilities. RAdm James H. Doyle, commanding Task Force 90, was alerted for this purpose at the early date of 20 November by VAdm C. Turner Joy, ComNavFE. The Chinese counteroffensive was then only three days old but CTF-90 commenced planning for the redeployment of ground forces by water in Korea, either as an administrative operation or an emergency measure. Units of TF-90 were issued Operations Order 19-50, providing for half of the amphibious force to operate on the east coast of Korea under Adm Doyle, while the other half had responsibility for the west coast under RAdm Lyman Thackrey, CTG-90.1. Overall control of all redeployment operations was to be exercised by CTF-90.

On 29 November ComNavFE advised Adm Doyle that the military outlook in Korea made it desirable for the ships of TF-90 to be on six hours' notice, either in Korean or Japanese waters. Most of the amphibious units were then in Japan for upkeep and replenishment, and Sasebo was designated as their port of assembly.

The following day, as the military situation continued to deteriorate, all units of TF-90 were directed to deploy immediately to Korea. There was a question as to which side of the peninsula would be indicated, but the plea of the Eighth Army appeared to be the most critical. Accordingly it was ordered that two thirds of the amphibious units and half of the transports be deployed to the west coast.

Preparations were not neglected meanwhile on the other coast. The anchorage area was enlarged in the harbor at Hungnam, and minesweeping operations were initiated to provide channels for gunfire support ships.

BELOW: Loading 1st Mar Div equipment aboard ships during evacuation of Hungnam. BELOW LEFT: Engineers blow railroad bridge to slow CCF forces in Hungnam area.





Not until 8 December was it finally determined that the emphasis would be on Hungnam and other east coast ports for a water lift of X Corps. Navy planning and preparations had been going ahead at full blast for a week, therefore, when Adm Joy summoned a high-level conference on this same day. VAdm Arthur D. Struble, Com7thFlt, LtGen Lemuel C. Shepherd, CG FMFPAC, and Adm Doyle met with ComNavFE aboard the USS *Mt. McKinley*, and the following day the order to re-deploy X Corps to the Pusan-Pohan area was received.

CTF-90 was assigned the missions of conducting re-deployment operations in east coast embarkation ports, of controlling all air and naval gunfire support, of protecting shipping en route to debarkation ports, and of coordinating withdrawal movements with CG X Corps.

☛ DURING THIS PRELUDE of Navy planning, Army and Marine elements in Northeast Korea were still in process of extricating themselves from the deadly embrace of the CCF counteroffensive. Prior to 9 December, it must be remembered, no orders for a redeployment by sea had been received by MajGen Edward S. Almond, CG X Corps. He was merely directed by CinCFE to assemble his units and prepare to defend the Hungnam base of operations. X Corps also had the responsibility of providing logistical support, largely in the form of air cargo and paradrops, for the 1st Mar Div in its breakout from the Chosin Reservoir area.

The Marines, as it proved, did more than save themselves from destruction. They kept the enemy so well occupied in the process that the other four widely dispersed divisions of X Corps were able to pull back with a minimum of enemy interference.

Three battalions of the 7th Inf Div had been badly cut up by the Chinese east of the Reservoir, and the survivors were placed under the operational control of MajGen Oliver P. Smith, CG 1st Mar Div. The remaining units made their way back to Hamhung without serious fighting, though the advanced positions extended nearly to the Manchurian border.

The 3d Inf Div and attached ROK Marines had even less difficulty in their withdrawal to the Wonsan area

**BELOW: LSTs stand by to take on fuel drums and other supplies during evacuation. BELOW RIGHT: Thousands of Korean refugees, who had followed the Marines out of the Reservoir area, added to the embarkation problem.**

for a move by land and sea to Hamhung. A task force from this division relieved a Marine battalion at Chihung-ni so that it could keep the route open for the main Marine column during the last stages of the breakout.

This left only the two divisions of I ROK Corps, which had penetrated along the littoral within 38 miles of Manchuria. Three regiments were designated to proceed by land and sea to Hamhung, while the other three regiments withdrew to Songjin (Map 1) for a lift by sea to the Samchok area.

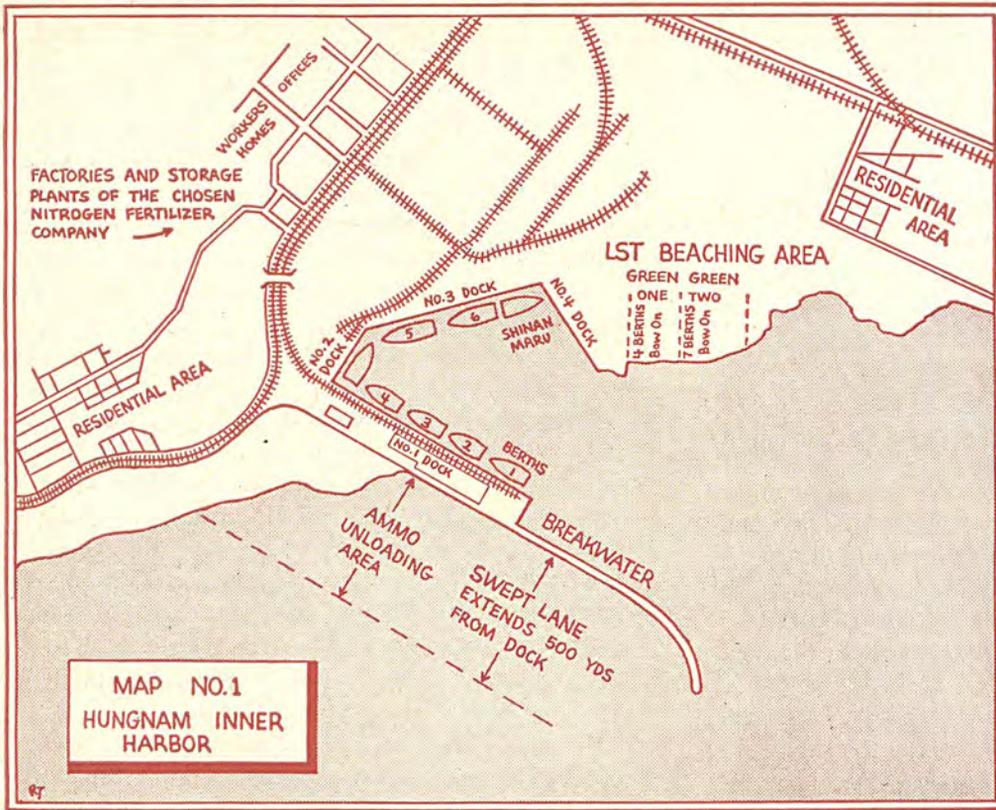
Intentions of a withdrawal from Northeast Korea were communicated indirectly to Gen Almond on 6 December by preliminary NAVFE and Far East Air Force operations orders directing the support of a X Corps redeployment. These were of value because of their warning nature, and three days later CG X Corps received orders from CinCFE which specified his missions for the withdrawal. After a lift from Hungnam by sea, X Corps was to assemble in the Pusan-Usan-Masan area of South Korea and report to CG Eighth Army. Only the I ROK Corps was excepted, and it was to be released to ROK Army upon arrival at Samchok (Map 1).

☛ THE REASONS for the redeployment were apparent after a glance at the current military situation. Although the CCF counteroffensive had failed to destroy any large units of X Corps, the enemy had succeeded in overrunning Northeast Korea. Northwest Korea had meanwhile been evacuated by the retreating Eighth Army, which was regrouping far southward near the 38th parallel. This added to the desirability of pulling out X Corps while it was relatively intact and coordinating its efforts with those of the Eighth Army. Northeast Korea, in short, was not worth the fight required to hold it.

On 11 December, as soon as possible after issuing his withdrawal order, Gen Douglas A. MacArthur conferred with CG X Corps at Yonpo Airfield, four miles from Hungnam. Gen Almond submitted his plans for defense of a Hungnam perimeter and set a date of 27 December for his divisions to pass to the control of the Eighth Army in South Korea.

This meant that scarcely two weeks were allotted for evacuating 100,000 troops and their equipment in the dead winter from beaches within striking distance of a formidable enemy.





MAP NO. 1  
HUNGNAM INNER HARBOR

At the outset it had been proposed by X Corps staff officers to defend a perimeter with a 15-mile radius at Hungnam and assign the 1st Mar Div to the most dangerous sector, including Yonpo Airfield. This plan was abandoned on the grounds that the Marines were the most battleworn of X Corps troops. Later the discussions narrowed down to a choice between two courses of action. The first was to hold a smaller perimeter and withdraw all units simultaneously from pie-shaped sectors until a single regiment was left with responsibility for defense. RCT-1, as the least battered of the three Marine regiments, was suggested for this duty. The other course was for major units to withdraw by side-slipping until one division was left with a mission of protecting a perimeter gradually contracted from its original seven-mile radius.

THE LATTER ALTERNATIVE was adopted. A X Corps operations order provided for the ROK regiments and 1st Mar Div to embark, followed in order by the 7th and 3d Inf Divs. Thus the 3d would have a final responsibility for defense which increased daily as the operation proceeded.

Marines had been well represented on the X Corps staff ever since the planning for the Inchon-Seoul operation.<sup>3</sup> Col Edward S. Forney served as deputy chief of staff, and other positions were filled by officers of Mobile Training Group Able, which reached Japan before the outbreak of Korean hostilities, to instruct Army units

<sup>3</sup>The story of the Inchon landing and capture of Seoul was told in the July and August issues of the GAZETTE.

in Marine amphibious techniques.

Marine officers, because their specialized training ship-to-shore attacks, were especially well qualified to direct a Hungnam operation which has been called "amphibious landing in reverse." Three of the five sections were headed by Marines, therefore, when Corps set up a control organization for the evacuation.

COL FORNEY WAS appointed by Gen Almond as control officer responsible for the continuous operation of the Hungnam port, for the withdrawal to staging areas of designated units, for loading of these troops assigned shipping, for the evacuation of Korean civilian refugees, and for the

removal of equipment. Maj. Bernard B. Shutt took charge of an operation section composed of representatives of all the major units of X Corps, including the 1st MA. The loading section was headed by Maj Charles Weiland, and the Navy liaison section by another Marine officer, Maj Jack R. Munday. Army officers ably directed the movement and rations sections.

The X Corps Fire Support Coordination Center was a Navy and Marine organization. LtCol Jack Tabor, USN, served as assistant coordinator, and LtCol Thomas Ahern of the 1st MAW headed the air section. Fifteen of the communicators were Marine enlisted men.

Other Marines had already taken a leading part in the rehearsal for the main show—the evacuation of Wonsan by 3d Inf Div troops sent to Hungnam and ROK elements sailing for Samchok. From 2 to 10 December the Shore Party Bn of the 1st Mar Div had a mission of outloading while sharing the defense of the harbor with a 3d Inf Div battalion. These Leathernecks not only operated the dock facilities to capacity but also manned the central sector of the inner defense perimeter.

Another 1st Mar Div outfit, Co A of the 1st Amphibious Truck Bn, speeded the operation by making hundreds of round trips from docks to ships with DUKWs.

On 10 December the evacuation of Wonsan was completed after the outloading of 3,834 troops, 7,009 Korean civilians, 1,146 vehicles, and 10,013 bulk tons of cargo. Hungnam was the destination of the SP Bn, less a detachment which sailed for Pusan, along with the DUKW



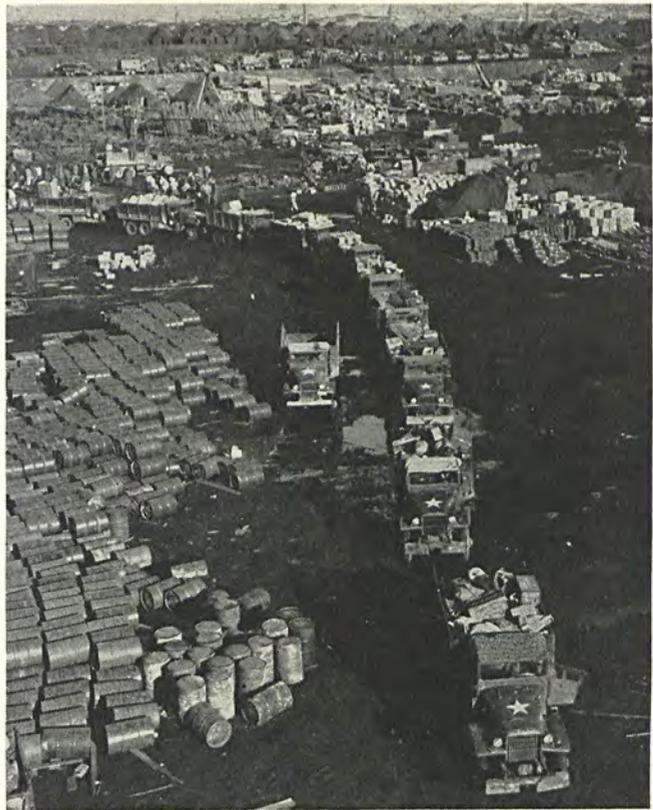
assume responsibility for the unloading of the 1st Marine Division personnel and equipment when they arrived. The Wonsan evacuation was instructive as a small-scale preview of the tasks awaiting at Hungnam. And without taking credit away from Army and Marine efforts, Wonsan was largely a Navy show. Effective gunfire from support ships kept North Korean forces at such a respectful distance that the perimeter defenses were never seriously threatened. Covering missions continued to be conducted until the last friendly troops withdrew, and operations were completed without the necessity of destroying supplies and equipment.

Preparations at Hungnam were just getting into full stride as the Wonsan evacuation ended. CTF-90 assumed responsibility for all naval functions on 10 December after approving loading plans made at a conference held by Navy officers with representatives of X Corps. Meanwhile the harbor was cleared for action when loaded and partially loaded ships with cargo not needed by X Corps were sent to Pusan with orders to unload and return immediately.

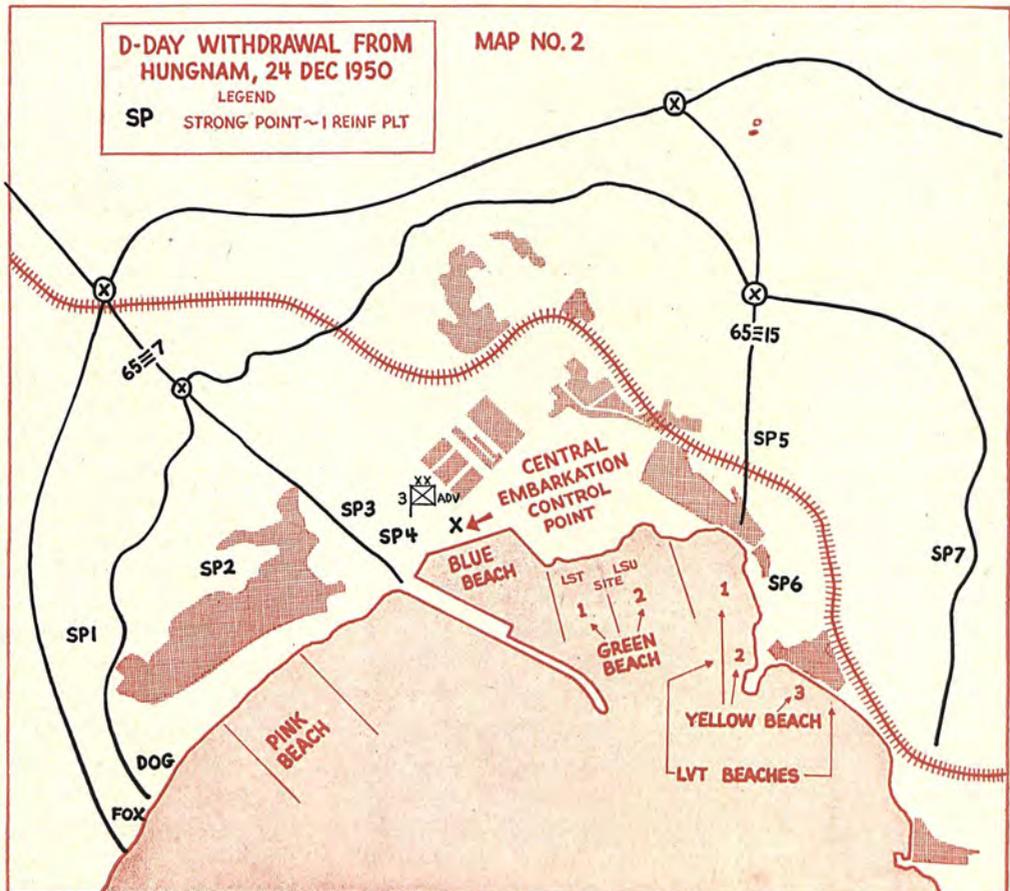
CTF-90 exercised control of the Hungnam operations through a task organization set up after a study of harbor facilities and loading problems. This organization consisted of a chain of such control stations as CTF-90 operations, control vessel, beachmaster, port director, and embarkation control liaison officer. Communication was

maintained by means of primary and secondary VHF voice radio circuits, so that officers could speed all operations by speaking directly to one another.

Col Forney had meanwhile established the headquarters of the X Corps control organization in a shed of the dock area. Availability of units and equipment was decided by the operation section in accordance with tactical and logistical requirements. Next, it became the responsibility of the Navy liaison section to supply the link between X Corps and CTF-90 for the management of shipping within the harbor. When a unit had been alerted as to embarkation, the loading section made its preparations, the movement section directed traffic to the assigned staging area, and the operations section provided



Loaded trucks line up to go aboard ship. Tent city in background is for troops awaiting their turn to embark.





At Hungnam the whole outlook was much brighter.

for the wants of the troops awaiting their turn in the tent city which sprang up behind the dock area.

Dockside operations were the responsibility of the 2d Engineer Special Brigade of X Corps, reinforced by the SP troops of the 1st Mar Div who had arrived from Wonsan. These duties included the providing of camp facilities as well as supervision of the technical details of loading.

The naval control stations got into action the moment that a ship entered the outer harbor. CTF-90 operations advised the port director as to the berth to be occupied, and the ship was ordered to proceed from anchorage and wait near the breakwater for a pilot. The pilot docked the ship, after its berth became empty, with the assistance of tugs. Then the various Navy officers and X Corps sections exercised their functions in turn until the loaded ship was assigned a "chop time" for being moved out from the dock.

As compared to Inchon, with an average spring tide range of 27 feet, Hungnam was a good harbor in spite of its small size. The tidal range was less than a foot, but berths for loading only seven ships were available at the docks (Map 1). Navy officers raised the ante to 11, however, by double-banking four additional ships to be loaded from the outboard side. In addition, 11 LSTs could be handled simultaneously—seven at Beach Green One, and the others at Beach Green Two. Or as many as three LSTs could be beached bow-on at Dock Four when all space in the Green Beach area was filled.

Navy officers may have had their sleep disturbed by nightmares of a mechanical breakdown at a critical moment. Only two 390-ton diesel electric tugs were available, and their engines had more than 5,000 running hours since the last overhaul. Not only were spare parts

lacking, but inexperienced personnel had to be hastily trained to provide extra crews.

Here was perhaps the most fragile link in the whole complex chain of operations, since these radio-equipped tugs were vitally needed for handling ships in winter winds up to 40 knots. But the link miraculously held throughout the evacuation. Neither tug broke down for more than three hours in all, and repairs were made with the materials at hand.

The human machinery of the operation was also put to a strain as an inevitable consequence of haste in planning and preparations. Many of the Army officers were inexperienced in amphibious techniques, and it is understandable that some of their estimates went wide of the mark. One of these slips occurred when only an AK, an APA, and a Victory-type ship were provided at first by CTF-90 for the sea lift of the three ROK regiments from Hungnam to Samchok. This allowance was based on initial X Corps estimates of 12,000 personnel and "a few" vehicles. Army totals had to be revised upward to 25,000 troops and civilians plus 700 vehicles, but the Navy task organization was equal to the test. Difficult as it was to find the shipping at this stage, CTF-90 committed an additional APA, two more merchantmen and an LST with the seeming ease of a magician producing rabbits from a hat.

RAILROAD TRANSPORTATION also played an important part in the operation. With the aid of Korean laborers the route from Wonsan to Hungnam had been opened, and the X Corps control organization assembled between 400 and 500 freight cars. Some 8,900 tons of Class 1 ammunition were among the supplies moved to the port by rail to be loaded on ships.

A third element was utilized in the form of air transport. Thus an evacuation within an evacuation took place when 112 Air Force planes and 10 Marine planes completed the air lift of 3,600 men, 196 vehicles, 1,300 tons of cargo, and hundreds of Korean refugees from the Yonpo Airfield to Hungnam. The "flying boxcars" sometimes took off at three-minute intervals in spite of adverse weather, and the field was utilized as long as it could be defended within the receding perimeter.

The evacuation of the 1st Mar Div began as soon as the first elements reached Hamhung after the breakout from the Reservoir. It could not be said that these Leathernecks lacked experience, for this was their fourth embarkation in a period of five months. Units were assigned vehicle and cargo assembly areas in Division Embarkation Order No. 3-50, published on 11 December, and staging began at once. Owing to the impossibility of predetermining the type of shipping or time of arrival, this order did not err on the side of rigidity. Marine amphibious experience paid off, however, when embarkation officers loaded by sight, planning their loads with

out the aid of stowage diagrams.

Such was the speed of the outloading that most of the troops proceeded directly from bivouac areas to beaches, without pausing in the tent city behind the two Green beaches. Drivers were embarked with their vehicles, so that cargo space had to be used to billet troops on commercial ships. Between 4,500 and 5,500 men were embarked on each of the three APs. Seven commercial cargo vessels, 13 LSTs, 3 LSDs, an APA, and an AKA were also assigned.

The outloading of the division was completed at 1500 on 15 December. And as the Marines sailed for Pusan, the embarkation of the 7th Inf Div began.

Problems of defense took on an increasing importance, of course, as the perimeter shrank. X Corps intelligence reports considered it possible that 11 CCF divisions and two NK divisions might be moved within striking distance. Most of these forces did not materialize, but the enemy's reluctance may be charged to the warm reception prepared for him by X Corps and TF-90.

THROUGHOUT the evacuation the ground forces of the two Army divisions had only patrol actions, and remarkably few battle casualties were incurred. Again the Navy had the principal part, and the story of the Hungnam defense is told by the total of nearly 34,000 projectiles and 12,800 rockets fired by support ships. About 500 more 8-inch rounds and 12,800 more 5-inch rounds were expended at Hungnam than during the Inchon amphibious assault.

Army artillery supplied most of the interdiction fires at the outset, with the Navy giving deep support. But as the perimeter narrowed to the Hungnam area after the evacuation of Hamhung and Yonpo, the two cruisers, seven destroyers, and three rocket-firing craft covered the whole front from their assigned positions in mine-swept lanes. At the climax the battleship *Missouri* contributed to the final barrage with 162 of her 16-inch projectiles.

Vigorous air support by Navy, Air Force, and Marine planes also did much to discourage any hostile intentions the enemy may have had. On 11 December the responsibility for air defense passed afloat, and TAC Squadron One of TF-90 assumed control of all aircraft in the objective area, including TF-77, 1st MAW, and 5th AF units. Marine planes continued to operate until the 13th from Yonpo, when all shore-based air units were evacuated. Four days later, Marine TAC Squadron Two established a secondary TADC on board an LST.

Winter weather did not prevent the fliers from taking off the icy runways of the five carriers for reconnaissance, interdiction strikes, and close support missions beyond the bomb line. As the perimeter contracted, the air support units redoubled their efforts to detect and break up CCF concentrations threatening the beachhead.

Altogether, it was an imposing armada that Adm Doyle directed from the USS *Mt. McKinley* when the 7th Inf Div loaded out from 15 to 20 December. On the 19th, CG 3d Inf Div assumed responsibility for the defense of Hungnam as Gen Almond and his staff moved aboard the flagship. The main line was a perimeter about 5,000 yards from the center of the port area, with an outpost line extending about 1,000 yards beyond.

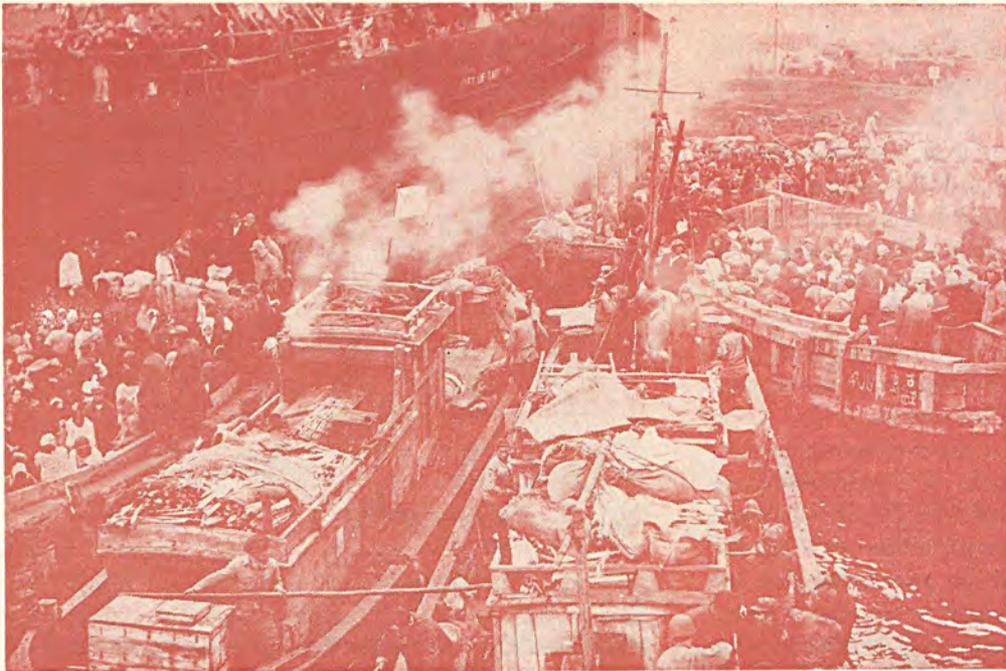
Embarkation problems at this stage were multiplied by the pitiful horde of Korean refugees. Their mass flight from Communist vengeance had begun during the 1st Mar Div breakout, when thousands of old men, women, and children followed the Leathernecks. Medical personnel brought several Korean babies into an unfriendly world on sub-zero nights, and the column of fugitives swelled until 50,000 tried to take the last train out of Hamhung.

Again CTF-90 somehow managed to find the shipping after being informed that an original Army estimate of 25,000 refugees had been nearly quadrupled. But sardines were never packed as intimately as the first installment of 50,000 Koreans jammed into three Victory ships and two LSTs. It became standard practice to embark at least 5,000 on an LST, not counting children in arms, and one ship set a record with 12,000.

During the four last days of the evacuation only the

**TOP: Engineers destroy bridge across Songchon River at Hamhung and push locomotive into gap. BOTTOM: Koreans from Hungnam wait patiently to go aboard ROK LST.**





LEFT: Korean fishing boats bring refugees to Hungnam for transfer to LSTs and evacuation to Pusan. LOW: Men of the 5th Marines board transport LCM which brought them out from Hungnam beach.



three infantry regiments of the 3d Inf Div, plus artillery units, were left as a covering force. So far the Army scheme of maneuver had been carried out with precision in spite of the relative tactical inexperience of the units employed. Both the 3d and 7th Divs had been hastily brought up to combat strength just before the Inchon-Seoul operation. Some of the battalions were mere cadres at the outset, their ranks being filled with South Korean recruits as well as green Army replacements. Nevertheless, the two outfits gave a good account of themselves at Hungnam, even though their training had been largely

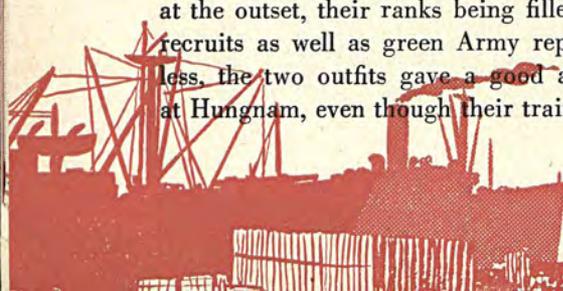
received in the field during the past two months.

The shore-to-ship movements of the final four days were coordinated by TF-90 with the Army scheme of maneuver was an "assault in reverse" which departed in few respects from the principles of a conventional ship-to-shore operation. It remained at this climax to embark the Inf Div units, and the planning contemplated a movement in four phases, leading up to D-day on 24 December. The first two phases included the loading of cargo, equipment, and service troops. Phase three consisted of the embarkation of combat forces less the covering forces, and the fourth phase called for withdrawal of these last platoons.

Seven landing sites were employed (Map 2). From left to right they were designated as Pink Beach, Blue Beach, Green One and Two Beaches, and Yellow One, Two, Three Beaches. The 7th RCT, holding the left sector of the final perimeter, was to embark from Pink Beach. Blue and Green One Beaches were assigned to the 6th RCT in the center, while the 15th RCT had Green Two and the three Yellow beaches. The final stages of evacuation were to be protected by covering forces which would embark from Pink and Yellow Beaches.

Loading operations continued through the 23d and the Engineer Special Brigade kept 5,000 Korean laborers at work. At the finish a total of 105,000 US and ROK military personnel had been embarked and 91,000 civilian refugees. The statistics of supplies and equipment were equally impressive—17,500 vehicles and 350,000 man-shipment tons of cargo loaded out of Hungnam on 6 AKA, 12 TAP, 76 time-charter ships, 81 LST, and 1 LSD loads.

The ground situation remained quiet, but at dark on the 23d the naval gunfire was stepped up to three times



its previous volume as the *Missouri* arrived on station for barrage missions. H-hour had been set at 1100 the next morning, and seven LSTs were beached at 0800 to receive 3d Inf Div personnel. Soon the three regiments were reduced to as many battalions which acted as covering forces while the other troops fell back to assigned beaches. All withdrawals were conducted methodically along specified routes by units carrying marking panels. Then the covering forces themselves pulled out at H-plus-090, leaving only seven reinforced platoons manning a chain of strong points. And the operation drew to a close when these platoons boarded an LST after a search for stragglers. Air and naval gunfire support had made an uneventful climax except for the accidental explosion of an Army munitions dump on Pink Beach, resulting in two killed and 21 wounded.

ALTHOUGH MOST OF THE LEATHERNECKS had been recuperating for a week in the Masan area, the 1st Mar Div was represented at the finish. The 1st ANGLICO (air and naval gunfire liaison specialists) had controlled the fire of several destroyers. The SP Bn (less the detachment sent to Pusan) had aided in operating the beaches, and one and a half companies of the 1st Amphibian Tractor Bn had taken part throughout. Some of these Marines remained on duty until 24 December.

Among the few supplies which had to be left behind were 400 tons of frozen dynamite and 500 thousand-pound bombs. But even these munitions were not wasted, since they added to the emphasis of the final demolitions.

All beaches were clear by 1436 on the 24th, and 20 minutes later the sortie from the harbor commenced under cover of naval air and gunfire support ships. No enemy fire was received. At 1632 the amphibious ships had cleared the anchorage area, with the gunfire support ships following shortly afterwards.

The chill, misty dawn of Christmas Day found the *Mt. McKinley* about to sail for Ulsan with CTF-90 and CG X Corps after an eminently successful operation. It had been pretty much the Navy's three-ring circus, and

studious ensigns were perhaps reminded of lines written by a former preceptor at Annapolis. Naval tactics were somewhat less complex in 1890, but Capt Alfred Thayer Mahan might have been summing up the Hungnam redeployment when he commented on "that noiseless pressure on the vitals . . . that compulsion, whose silence, once noted, becomes to the observer the most striking and awful mark of the working of Sea Power."

On this Christmas Day in 1950, however, it could not be said that TF-90 had applied its pressure noiselessly. For the echoes of the thundering naval gunfire barrage had hardly died out when naval demolitions blew the Hungnam waterfront sky-high in volcanic eruptions of flame and rubble. Then all became silent as the last ships vanished over the horizon, leaving behind them the bleak northeast Korean coast where the 1st Mar Div had landed just two months before to the day. **USMC NEXT MONTH: *The Pohang Guerrilla Hunt—Marine Mission in South Korea.***



BELOW AND RIGHT: As last troops leave Hungnam beachhead, the harbor installations are blown sky high.



# **THE POHANG GUERRILLA HUNT**

## **1600 Square Miles of Trouble**

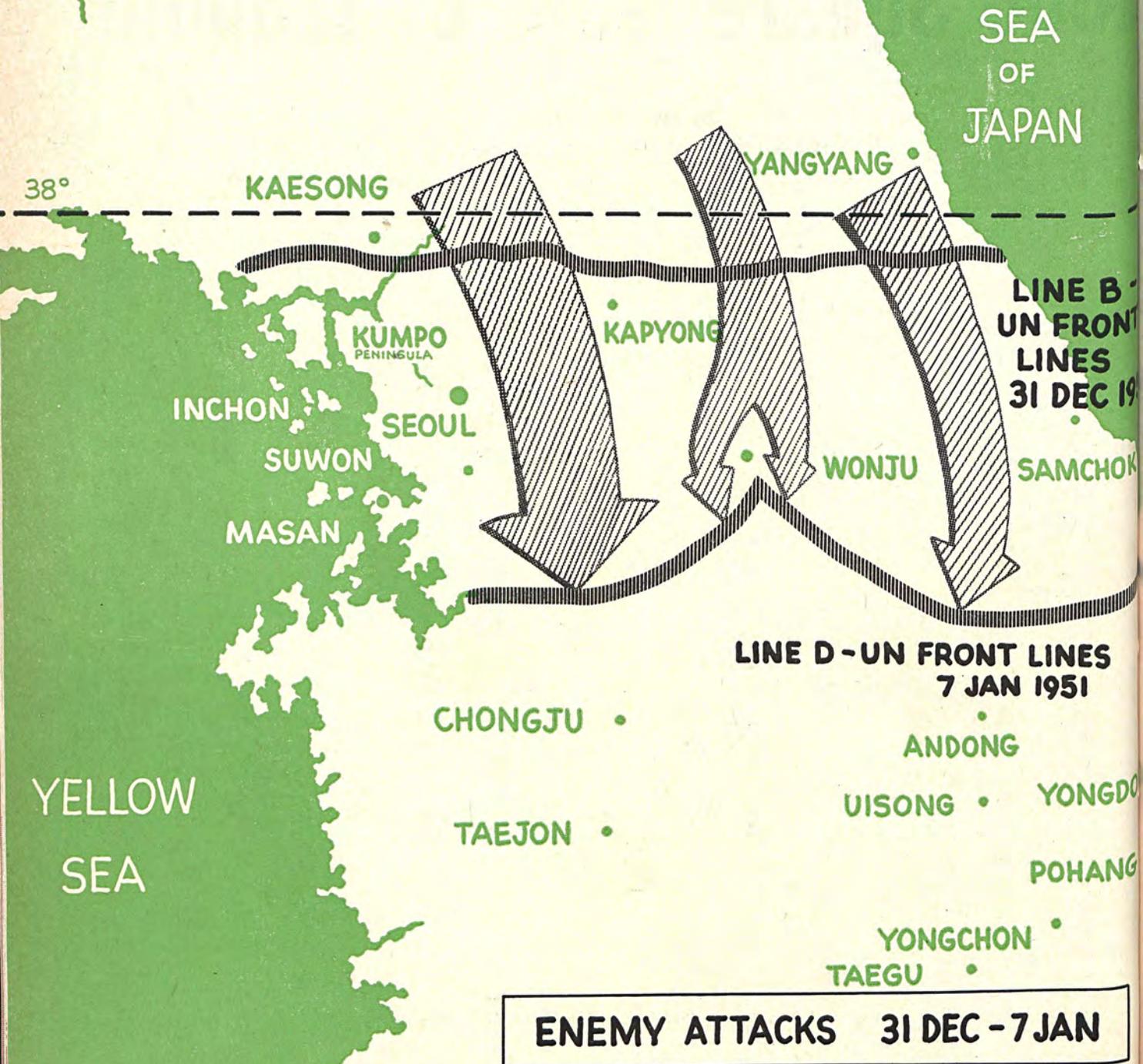
*By Lynn Montross*

Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps



# THE POHANG GUERRILLA HUNT

## 1600 Square Miles of Trouble



MAP 1

◆ MILES IN KOREA, AS THE MEN OF THE 1ST MARINE Division had learned to their grief, were more often vertical than horizontal. They seemed to twist violently uphill over a one-way trail, only to writhe their way up some steeper and higher hill. This impression was confirmed by the statistics. For the life of heavy-duty tires was 3,000 miles on Korean mountain roads as compared to an average of 15,000 to 20,000 in World War II.

Wear and tear on the human elements was also severe. And during the last five months of 1950 the men of the 1st Mar Div had made a complete tour of the peninsula, fighting their way about the circuit.

The round trip began at Pusan, where the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade landed early in August and moved to an assembly area near Masan in Eighth U. S. Army reserve. Then came the hard-slugging operations of the Pusan perimeter, followed by a sea lift in September up the west coast to Inchon. Here the components of the 1st Mar Div were united in the target area as the landing force of X Corps for an amphibious assault on Inchon and a drive inland to capture Seoul. This objective had barely been secured when another sea lift took the division around the peninsula in October for an unopposed landing at Wonsan on the northeast coast.

A new war flared up from the embers of the old as Red China came to the rescue of the beaten North Korean forces in November. The 1st Mar Div, taking the full impact of the Chinese Communist counterstroke in the X Corps zone, cut its way to the seacoast in the famous breakout from the Chosin Reservoir. At the finish the Marines emerged as a fighting division with nearly all of their equipment intact. But the enemy had overrun northeast Korea, and in December the 1st Mar Div shared in the X Corps evacuation by sea from Hungnam to Pusan.\*

It was the second landing at Pusan for many of the Marines, and they ate their Christmas dinner in the familiar surroundings of the same old area at Masan. To complete the circuit, the division passed again into the reserve of the Eighth Army.

Lifts by sea, lifts by motor and air and rail, lifts by shoe leather—every means of transportation had entered into the round trip. Amphibious assaults, street fighting, river crossings, mountain warfare, perimeter defenses, outloadings, and evacuations—all these, too, had been experienced in rapid succession during the past five months. The Leathernecks had qualified as tactical Jacks-of-all-trades, and in January 1951 it could hardly have

\*These operations of the 1st Mar Div have been described in consecutive issues of the MARINE CORPS GAZETTE in 1951—the Pusan perimeter in June; Inchon-Seoul in July and August; the mobilization of the Reserves in September; the Wonsan landing in October; the Chosin Reservoir breakout in November; and the Hungnam evacuation in December.

by Lynn Montross

In cooperation with the Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, the GAZETTE herewith presents another in a series of official accounts dealing with Marine operations in Korea. Prepared by writers and researchers of the Historical Division, these articles are based on available records and reports from units in Korea. Also to be treated in this series:

Operation Killer

Operation Ripper

The Chinese Counteroffensive of April

Publication is scheduled for consecutive monthly issues.

Admittedly it is too soon to write a definitive history of Marine fighting in Korea. Not only are enemy sources lacking, but even Marine and Army records are still incomplete. Articles of the length to be used in the GAZETTE, moreover, do not allow space for more than an outline of operations which will ultimately be given the detailed treatment of a monograph.

But timeliness is also an end to be sought, and these preliminary narratives are based on Marine and Army reports received up to this time. These articles are presented in the hope that GAZETTE readers will feel free to add to the incomplete record. This is an invitation, therefore, for you to supplement the existing record. Send your comments and criticisms, as well as any other information you can make available, to the Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, Washington 25, D. C.

surprised them to be assigned an anti-guerrilla operation as their first mission of the new year.

The problem was quite simple—on paper. About 1,600 square miles in southeast Korea, most of them standing on end in mountainous terrain, were contained in the new sector of the Pohang-Andong-Yongdok area. North Korean troops in estimated division strength had infiltrated southward through the mountains for guerrilla operations. The 1st Mar Div had the mission of destroying this enemy, and staff officers were doubtless reminded of the old recipe for cooking rabbit which begins, "First, catch your rabbit!"

It was a problem in time and space, and any guerrilla-catching solutions were overshadowed by recent disturbing changes in the overall military picture. For the Eighth Army had just been dealt its second heavy blow in two months. Both defeats were at the hands of the Chinese Communists who crossed the Yalu in overwhelming strength to rob the United Nations forces of a victory already won.

Thirteen North Korean divisions had been battered into helplessness when the Eighth Army began its "end the war" sweep toward the Manchurian border on 24 November. A day later this offensive collided with the vanguard of an estimated 29 infantry divisions which the Chinese had massed in the mountains of northern Korea. Marching by night and hiding by day, these forces had maintained such an amazing camouflage discipline that their counterstroke of the 25th came by surprise. The II ROK Corps disintegrated on the right flank, making it necessary for other Eighth Army units to retreat or risk envelopment.

Next, the enemy poured into the gap between the Eighth

Army and X Corps, striking the latter on the 27th. As the Marines began their Chosin Reservoir breakout, the Eighth Army continued its withdrawal in northwest Korea. Pyongyang, the captured North Korean capital, was abandoned on 5 December by UN forces which had recently stood within 37 miles of the Manchurian border. With the I and IX Corps fighting delaying actions, the Eighth Army fell back over ice-glazed roads choked with troops, tanks, vehicles, and refugees.

On the east coast the evacuation of Hungnam by X Corps had commenced, which meant that all Korea north of the 38th Parallel was being abandoned to the enemy. The five X Corps divisions were redeployed by sea to South Korea while the Eighth Army conducted a slow and orderly withdrawal to Line B. Extending from the Kumpo Peninsula on the west coast, this line passed through Choksong, about 30 miles north of Seoul, and then eastward to the coast of the Sea of Japan (Map 1). The retirement had barely been completed when the commanding general, LtGen Walton J. Walker, was killed in a jeep accident. LtGen Matthew B. Ridgway, the new appointee, assumed command three days later after flying from Washington.

This was the situation on the last day of the year, when the 1st Mar Div went into Eighth Army reserve. Other X Corps units had already been taken into the Eighth Army in preparation for an expected CCF offensive on 25 December which failed to materialize. It could hardly have been imagined on that Christmas Day that the enemy had it in his power to strike exactly a week later and inflict another costly defeat on UN forces.

The blow fell in the bitter and breathless cold of New Year's Eve. History repeated itself with painful fidelity during the last hours of 1950 as five ROK divisions gave



The job meant either a battle or a guerrilla hunt.

way in the central and eastern sectors. Again, as in November, other Eighth Army units were compelled to withdraw to avoid envelopment.

Although the UN forces had not been surprised this time, they were hard-pressed by the "human sea" tactics of an enemy who was capable of clearing mine fields by the simple expedient of sending men ahead to be sacrificed. The attacking forces were believed to include six corps of the CCF 3d Field Army and a corps of the 4th Field Army, each containing three or four divisions. Since November the beaten North Korean army had been given a new lease on life, so that three reorganized corps were taking part along with the Chinese. Altogether, it was estimated that the Communists had massed a total of more than 450,000 men south of the Yalu.

In preparation for the expected blow, Gen Ridgway had disposed the Eighth Army with these units of I Corps on the left flank northwest of Seoul—the Turkish Brig, the 29th British Brig, the ROK 1st Div, and the US 25th Div. North of Seoul the US IX Corps comprised the 27th British Commonwealth Brig, the Greek and Philippine battalions, the ROK 6th Div, the US 1st Cavalry Div, and the US 24th Inf Div. The remainder of the line, from Kapyong to the east coast near Yangyang, was held by the ROK III, II, and I Corps, including from left to right the ROK 2d, 5th, 8th, 9th, and Capital Divisions.

Two divisions of the reorganized US X Corps, the 2d (with attached Dutch and French battalions) and the 7th, had been moved up to the important lateral roads of the Chongju-Wonju-Chechon area with a mission of countering a possible enemy breakthrough on the eastern front. The 1st Mar Div, in Army reserve, was assigned a sector in the vicinity of Pohang but directed to continue training and reorganization at Masan. The 187th Airborne RCT and the Thailand Bn held secondary defense positions near Suwon, while the US 3d Div, the ROK 11th Div, and the Canadian and New Zealand battalions were still farther back in reserve.



This was the lineup on 1 January when the enemy achieved his first deep penetrations in the ROK-held central and eastern sectors. Within 24 hours every UN unit in the front line was under attack except the US 25th Div and Turkish Brig on the left and the ROK Capital Div on the extreme right. The main CCF effort developed north of Seoul, where the ROK 1st Div was inundated near Choksong after putting up a good fight against nine attacking divisions. The breakthrough imperiled the left flank of the US 24th Div in the Uijongbu area, and the resulting withdrawal made it necessary to abandon Seoul and Inchon to the enemy.

IT WAS AN UNUSUAL EXPERIENCE for Leathernecks to find themselves in the role of bystanders while a battle was in progress. This phenomenon was explained by the fact that the 1st Mar Div had reached Masan with a shortage of 140 officers and 3,654 men after the heavy casualties of the Chosin Reservoir operations. Throughout January and the first week of February, replacements to a total of 104 officers and 3,283 men were drawn in various drafts from Japan, the Mariannas, the Philippines, and the United States. Even so, the division continued to operate on an understrength basis because of non-battle casualties sustained during this same period.

The news of the evacuation of Seoul and Inchon was depressing to Marines who had wrested those cities from the enemy in September. Thousands of Korean civilians fled in terror when the CCF invaders occupied the ROK capital on 4 January and the seaport the next day. As the second withdrawal from this area by UN forces since the beginning of the war, it was a moral blow to the cause. It was also a material setback, since it meant the loss of a valuable port and staging center. Once again, as a consequence, Pusan must become the primary receiving port for more troops and supplies than its facilities could handle efficiently.

WHEN SEOUL AND INCHON could no longer be held, I and IX Corps with their attached forces were ordered to fall back to positions south of the Han River. Gen Ridgway gave both corps commanders the mission of inflicting "maximum punishment, maximum delay, consistent with the maintenance intact of your major units." A heavy price in casualties was exacted from the enemy, but the frozen river was no barrier to Chinese who could cross on the ice. The right flank of UN forces in western Korea was endangered, moreover, by the rapid advance of invaders meeting little resistance in ROK-held areas to the east. These factors influenced a command decision to retire still farther south.

The phrase "withdrawal to prepared positions" has covered a multitude of strategic sins, but this time it needed no apology. Line D, Operations Plan 19, had been established to meet such an emergency, and the two

corps carried out an orderly maneuver. Enemy pressure was less troublesome than the interference of hordes of Korean civilians fleeing southward. At Suwan, where large stocks of military supplies had to be evacuated, a screaming mob of 100,000 refugees milled into the railway yard and stopped trains. Such demonstrations made it necessary for troop movements to be coordinated with a plan for channeling the civilian migration to assigned centers in southwest Korea.

Line D (Map 1) extended from the west coast through Ansong and Chechon to the eastern sectors, where a fluid situation prevailed as a result of enemy penetrations. In this area only the stubborn resistance of the US 2d and 7th Divs of X Corps had enabled the battered ROK 2d, 5th, 8th, and 9th Divs to be extricated. Here the front was still obscurely outlined all the way to the vicinity of Samchok on the east coast.

Until the lines became stabilized in this area, two enemy possibilities had to be recognized: (1) a large-scale CCF breakthrough which would endanger the flank of UN forces in central and west Korea; (2) the infiltration of guerrilla bands southward through the mountains for destructive raids on roads and rail communications.

Preventive measures were discussed on 8 January at Eighth Army headquarters. As a first step, Gen Ridgway ordered MajGen Oliver P. Smith, CG 1st Mar Div, to move from Masan up to the Pohang area. The Leathernecks were given the mission of blocking penetrations in force south of the Andong-Yongdok road (Map 2) and protecting the Andong-Yongchon MSR—a section of the UN lifeline from the port of Pusan (Map 1). It was a broad assignment which might mean either a major battle or a guerrilla hunt. In any event, it would mean a good deal of strenuous outdoor exercise in a sector roughly 40 miles square, with the corners represented by Andong and Yongdok on the north, and Yongchon and Pohang on the south. The entire area was mountainous, especially in the center, and the secondary roads consisted of mere trails.

#### Marines gained more rifle training in the south.



Enemy forces in unknown numbers had already infiltrated through gaps in the eastern sectors of Line D. Guerrilla activity was reported as far west as Tanyang, on the MSR of IX Corps, and as far south as Taejon, threatening the supply line of I Corps. Train ambushes occurred on 13 January in the Namchang area and to the south of Wonju. Other attacks took place on the rail line about 60 miles north of Taegu. In expectation of further attempts, trains were provided with a sandbagged car to absorb the shock of land-mine explosions, and a car containing guards with machine guns.

The tremendous possibilities of guerrilla warfare as an adjunct to large-scale military operations had been demonstrated time and again in WW II. Officers of the 1st Mar Div could have had no illusions about the im-

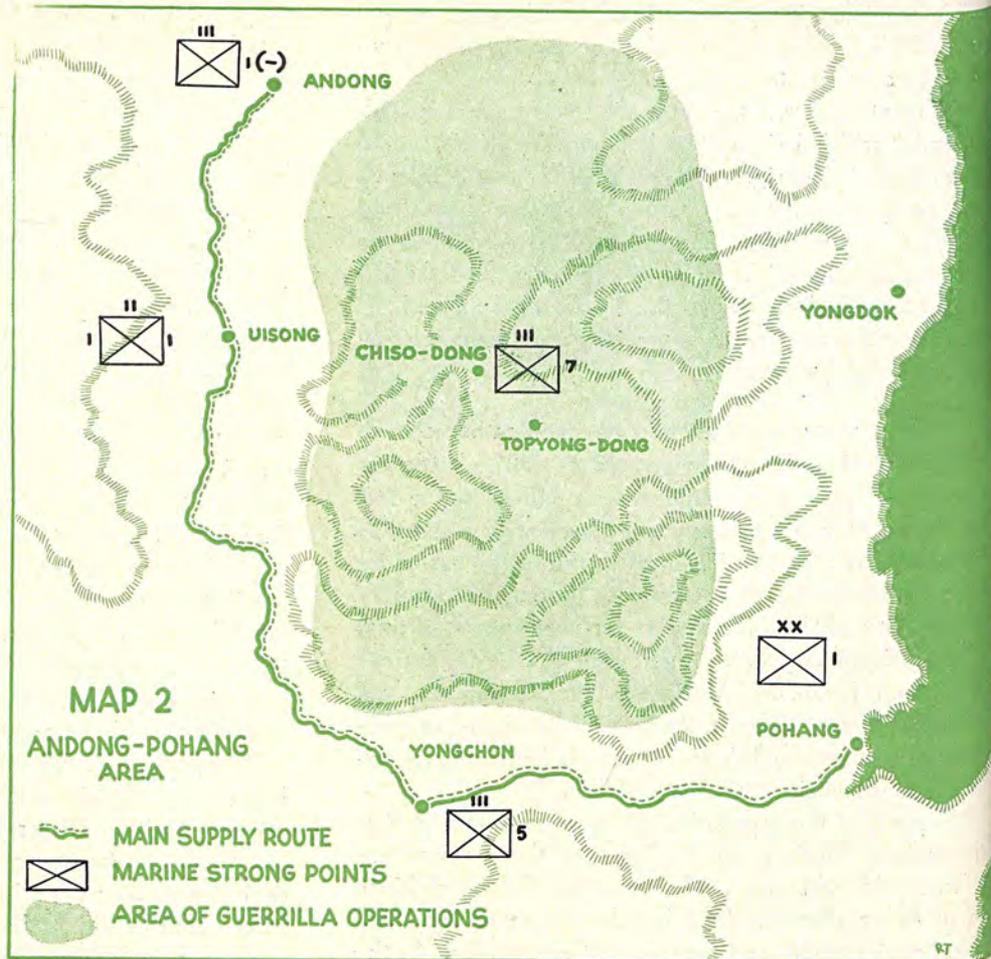
portance of their new mission, therefore, when it was reported that large North Korean forces had infiltrated behind the UN lines toward Andong.

Movement of division units to the Pohang area began on 10 January with a motor lift of RCT-1, reinforced by the Div Recon Co, the 2d Bn of the 11th Marines, Charlie Co of the 1st Engr Bn, and Dog Co of the 1st Med Bn. This force had the mission of protecting the MSR between Uisong and Yongchon after occupying both towns.

Further Eighth Army orders of the 12th, calling for the securing of Andong, were carried out by the 1st Bn of RCT-1. Meanwhile the rest of the division moved by LST and motor to Pohang, where the last unit arrived on the 17th. RCT-5 sent patrols up the coast to Yongdok as RCT-7 occupied the center of the 40-mile square, with its CP at Topyong-dong.

Persistent reports of enemy penetrations north of Andong led to new division orders sending RCT-1 to that town with the responsibility for protecting the MSR as far as Uisong while RCT-5 patrolled from Pohang to Uisong. Missions of other units remained unchanged.

Indications of an enemy build-up were confirmed on 18 January when a 3/1 patrol, operating east of Andong, flushed out an undetermined number of North Korean



troops. They took to their heels so earnestly that none was believed to have been killed or wounded. But the Leathernecks managed to catch three of them, and the prisoners identified their unit as the 27th Inf Regt of the NK 10th Div. Other units were the 25th and 29th Inf Regts, supported more in theory than fact by artillery, mortar, engineer, medical, and signal battalions. The division was so much understrength, however, that its estimated total of 6,000 to 8,000 troops consisted largely of infantry. A few mortars, according to the prisoners, were the heaviest weapons.

**Locating the guerrillas proved to be a problem.**





Mobility was increased, yet firepower was not lost.

In September, following the Inchon-Seoul operation and combined Eighth Army offensive, the NK 10th Div had shared in the general North Korean collapse. From the Naktong front the tattered remnants fell back across the 38th Parallel to the vicinity of Hwachon. There a reorganization took place after the Chinese intervention gave a new impetus to North Korean efforts. Neither the troops nor equipment were available to bring the division back to full strength, but the effectiveness of guerrilla warfare does not depend on the heaviest battalions. And on 26 December the rebuilt 10th, commanded by MajGen Lee Ban Nam, departed Hwachon with a mission of infiltrating through the UN lines to cut communications and harass rear installations of the Andong-Taegu area.

A more promising field for such operations could scarcely have been found in all South Korea. For this area was bisected by the two main supply lines linking Pusan with the I and IX Corps of the Eighth Army.

The NK 10th Div got off to a good start by eluding UN troops, after unwelcome contacts near Wonju, and dodging eastward for a penetration through the mountains. Good guerrilla tactics aim less at fighting than undermining an opponent's ability to fight, and the North Koreans continued to shun action while moving southward. Hiding by day and traveling by night over hill trails, they finally neared Andong on 18 February. There the loss of three prisoners to the Marines deprived them at the outset of the secrecy which is one of

the most potent weapons of guerrilla warfare.

Although it had been a fortuitous encounter for the Marines, staff officers realized that this was only the opening round. If it came to a fight, there could be little doubt about the outcome. But it had to be recognized that the North Korean as well as Chinese soldier was at his best in such techniques as infiltration, surprise night attacks, and camouflage. A battalion of Orientals could crowd for concealment and warmth into a cave which a platoon of Marines would have found too cramped. In short, the enemy's very weakness—his lack of heavy arms and equipment—was the strength of a highly mobile force operating in small and stealthy groups to prey upon communications.

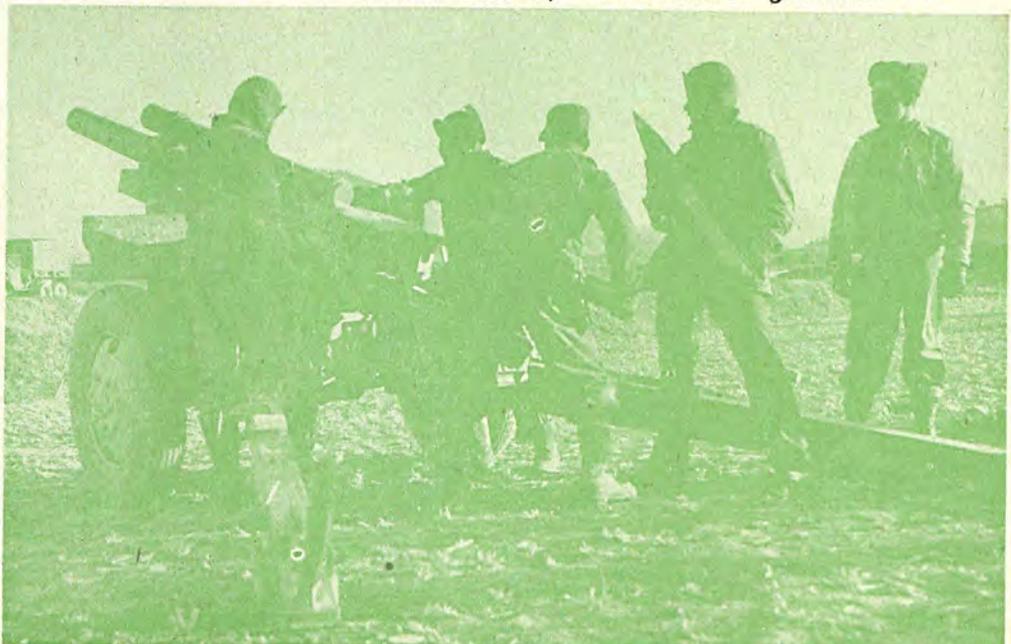
The enemy had his problems, too. Military critics have agreed, on a basis of WW II experience, that several advantages are essential for effective guerrilla warfare. These requirements have been summed up by a military publication as follows:

"The support of the local inhabitants; a secure and well-organized base of operations; a reliable intelligence system, including good communications and a source of supply."

It remained to be seen whether the NK 10th Div had these qualifications. Meanwhile, the 1st Mar Div had as its main task the responsibility of keeping open the 75-mile stretch of MSR from Pohang to Andong. Strong points were set up at Pohang, Yongchon, Uisong, and Andong, so that the farthest distance between Marine reinforcements was 15 miles—the halfway point between Yongchon and Uisong.

Locating the enemy proved from the beginning to be a more difficult problem than defeating him. Motorized

#### Marine artillery also hunted guerrillas.



patrolling went on aggressively in all three regimental sectors. And though every effort was made to increase mobility, the Leathernecks did not sacrifice firepower. Whenever feasible, such patrols had the support of tanks or at least a 105mm howitzer.

Secondary roads and obscure mountain trails were covered on foot by "rice-paddy patrols." Numbering from four men to a squad, these foot patrols ranged far out into the boondocks. On a single day the 5th Marines alone had 29 of these rice-paddy patrols in action as two motorized patrols kept watch over roads passable for vehicles.

The enemy contrived to make himself scarce for four days after his first unhappy contact with the 1st Mar Div. Only minor clashes were reported until 22 January, when a NK force estimated at about 2,000 was run down by a 1/1 patrol operating northeast of Uisong. The guerrillas paused long enough for an exchange of mortar and small-arms fire, then fled after breaking up into groups of 50 to 100. An estimated 200 casualties were inflicted by Marines who had no losses.

Information made it appear that the invaders were withdrawing from the zones of the 1st and 5th Marines into the mountainous center of the division sector, where the 7th Marines were operating. On 24 January, therefore, all three battalions of that regiment began a coordinated offensive. The enemy managed to avoid a large-scale

action that day, but in the early hours of the 25th the regimental CP at Topyong-dong came under attack. The assailants, using small arms and machine guns, were identified as a company of the NK 25th Regt. They were engaged after an hour and a half, only to meet a second repulse later in the morning.

Both attempts, tactically speaking, were examples of sending a boy to do a man's job. The Marines could have asked no greater favor than further displays of aggressive spirit, and 200 enemy obliged on the afternoon of the 25th by defending a hill west of Chiso-dong. Several attacks were stopped by NK mortars and machine guns, but in the morning the Leathernecks took the position with the support of mortar and artillery fires.

☛ ALL THREE BATTALIONS of RCT-7 continued to force eviction proceedings in the regimental zones with air and artillery support. Only in the vicinity of Haptoni did the Marine advance meet any opposition. There an estimated 400 men of the NK 25th Regt resisted in wooded areas with small arms and machine guns. About 150 were believed to have been killed by the Leathernecks in the two main fire fights.

Altogether, it was estimated that RCT-7 alone killed 250 guerrillas and wounded 500 in the three-day operation. The effectiveness of NK resistance may be measured by total 1st Mar Div losses of six killed and 28 wounded.

The cooperative spirit of natives was shown even when there was no lack of danger and hardship.





A command post of the 7th Marines set up among the hills of South Korea.

Such a mission was invaluable as a large-scale training exercise for the hundreds of new troops being absorbed into the 1st Mar Div. Some of them had arrived at Masan in time for a brief but vigorous period of indoctrination. Later arrivals went from Pusan directly up to the front. In either event, the replacements were given an unusual opportunity to learn by doing. Although Marine battle casualties continued to be light, there was no lack of danger and hardship. Thus a week in the mountains with a self-sufficient foot patrol was worth a month in a state-side training camp to newcomers instructed by Reservoir veterans.

for the week ending on 28 January. So far the effort of the NK 10th Div had shown symptoms of complete failure as a guerrilla operation. This is not surprising, since all the essentials for success were lacking. Far from receiving any support from the local inhabitants, the invaders had their own movements promptly reported to the Marines. Retaliations on civilians, such as burning a mountain village, did not improve relations. Nor did the enemy possess any of the other requisites for effective guerrilla warfare—a secure base, a source of supply, good communications, and an intelligence system.

During the three-day offensive of RCT-7, the other two regimental zones had few and minor contacts. Late in January, however, it was reported that the remnants of the NK 25th and 27th Regts were in flight toward the zone of RCT-5. The whole regiment was concentrated in the Yongchon area to deal a knockout blow, but the enemy stole away to the north in the vicinity of Topyong-dong.

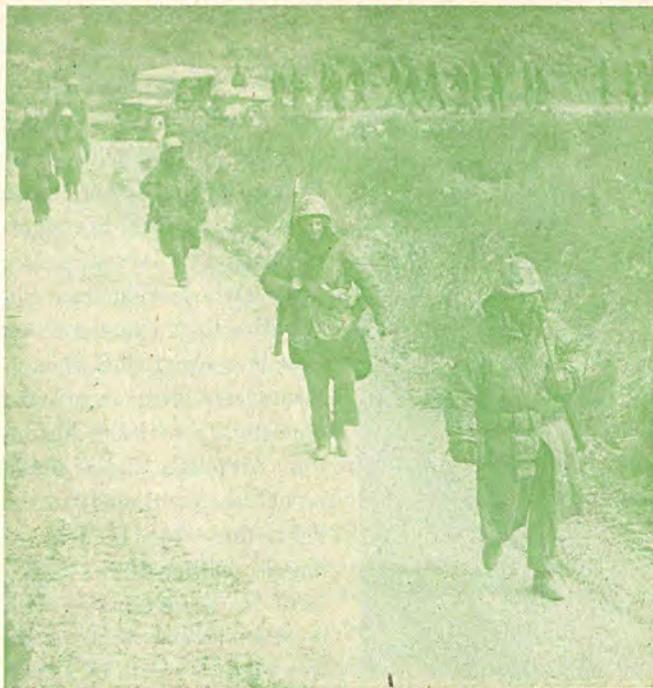
As a consequence, the heavy toll of 10th Div battle casualties was probably exceeded by losses from disease and desertion. Typhus had reached the proportions of an epidemic before the end of January, according to a prisoner. Other PWs reported that low morale, resulting from inadequate food and rest was also thinning the North Korean ranks.

When they weren't fighting, they were training.

Even so, 1st Mar Div intelligence reports warned that 3,000 to 5,000 enemy remained in the sector during the last week in January. They were reported to be well armed with US machine guns and M-1 rifles captured in the recent CCF offensives. Some of the guerrillas, including the women used as burden bearers, were wearing US Army jackets and trousers.



The strategic nuisance value of such a force could not be discounted. Until it was destroyed, the Marines could only regard their sector as containing 1,600 square miles of potential trouble which must not be allowed to happen.



Secondary roads and mountain trails were covered on foot.

Unrelenting Marine pressure throughout the first week of February wore the invaders down until groups larger than 50 men were seldom encountered. On the 3d, an NK 2dLt surrendered voluntarily to a RCT-7 patrol and brought three of his men with him. North Korean morale, he divulged, had sunk so low that all ranks were striving only for survival. The division commander, Gen Lee Ban Nam, had apparently become a victim of acute melancholia. He spent "nearly all his time," according to the prisoner, in the solitude of foxholes dug into overhanging banks. There he brooded constantly over his predicament, but without arriving at any better solution than alternate hiding and flight.

Certainly the situation did not offer much to make Gen Lee Ban Nam happy, and the Marines continued to give him fresh causes for depression. His footsore remnants eluded RCT-5 only to stumble into the zone of RCT-1, northeast of Uisong. Neither rest nor sanctuary awaited them, for 1/1 and 2/1 penetrated into the mountains near Sangyong to surprise and rout a force estimated at 400—the last group of any size to be encountered.

About 75 men of the NK 27th Regt were killed.

Excellent close air support was provided throughout the Pohang guerrilla hunt by 12 planes of VMF(N)-513, based at Pusan. Most of the other units of the 1st Mar Air Wing were in Japan meanwhile, preparing for redeployment in Korea when the need arose for further large-scale air operations. During this interim VMF(N)-513 flew 11 missions between 22 January and 11 February against enemy troops. Many other missions were carried out for the destruction of supply dumps.

On 2 February, in accordance with an Eighth Army directive, the 5th Korean Marine Regt was ordered to conduct operations on the left flank of the 1st Mar Div to intercept any possible enemy movement on the Andong-Yongdok road. By this time, however, it was becoming more and more apparent that the Marines had nearly finished their task. For the NK 10th Div was disintegrating into groups too small to do much mischief, even if they had not avoided contacts.

THE INVADERS had accomplished little to compensate for their heavy losses. They had seldom come within striking distance of the Andong-Pohang MSR, and traffic had not been interrupted even on secondary roads. Not a single Marine patrol had been cut off and destroyed; and division battle casualties amounted only to seven killed, 38 wounded, and 10 missing from 27 January to 3 February, the second week of active operations.

A few destroyed villages and about a dozen unguarded road blocks, several of them booby-trapped—such was the extent of the damage wrought by the NK 10th Div. This record could not compare with the vigorous guerrilla operations of the NK 5th Div just after the Marine landing at Wonsan late in October. Although reduced to an estimated strength of three battalions, that enemy force cut the Majon-ni—Wonsan MSR so persistently that a reinforced Marine RCT had to be assigned for its protection. In contrast, the three infantry regiments of the NK 10th Div did little except provide training for Marine replacements. This was a timely favor, since the

Motorized patrolling went on in all sectors.



rotation draft of five officers and 600 men—all of them chosen for merit as well as length of service—was due to depart on the USS *Breckinridge* in February. Thanks to the NK 10th Div, the places of these Leathernecks would be filled by new men with actual combat experience.

Gen Smith was able to report to CG Eighth Army on February that the enemy in this sector had been reduced an estimated 60% in strength and no longer threatened the MSR. Small and isolated groups remained to be mopped up, he added, but the situation was sufficiently under control to justify the withdrawal of the Marines.

As early as 9 January,

**RIGHT:** (top) Tanks were prepared to move out against guerrillas in Korea. (bottom) In any event, it meant a good deal of strenuous exercise in a sector roughly 40 miles square. The enemy resisted in wooded areas with small arms and machine guns.



while conferring with Gen Smith at Masan, Gen Ridgway had made it plain that he intended to resume the offensive at his first opportunity. Barely a week later he launched the limited objective offensives followed until the Eighth Army had regained some of its lost ground. But the enemy struck back during the second week of February in the Wonju area, and a breakthrough by four CCF divisions created a menacing salient.

This was the situation on 15 February when the 1st Marine Div was assigned to IX Corps and alerted for relief by the 17th, 31st, and 32d regiments of the 2d ROK Div. The Marines were ordered by CG X Corps to begin their move to the area south of Wonju the next day in preparation for a new Eighth Army drive—the most ambitious attack planned since the January retreat.

As the 1st Mar Div left the Pohang-Andong sector, a

few enemy groups were still hiding in the hills. But the area in general was as tranquil as if the invaders had never troubled its snowbound heights. The departing Leathernecks, in fact, might have been pardoned for concluding that the NK 10th Div and its gloomy commander were but creatures of the imagination—phantoms to be compared to the *Flying Dutchman*, the legendary ship condemned to sail on endlessly until the day of judgment. The destroyed NK 10th Div also seemed doomed to perpetual flight as its ghostly survivors made their way from crag to crag of the remote ridgelines.

US MC

*NEXT MONTH: The 1st Marine Division in Operation Killer.*

# **BUTTONING UP THE OFFENSIVE**

## **The Marines In Operation Killer**

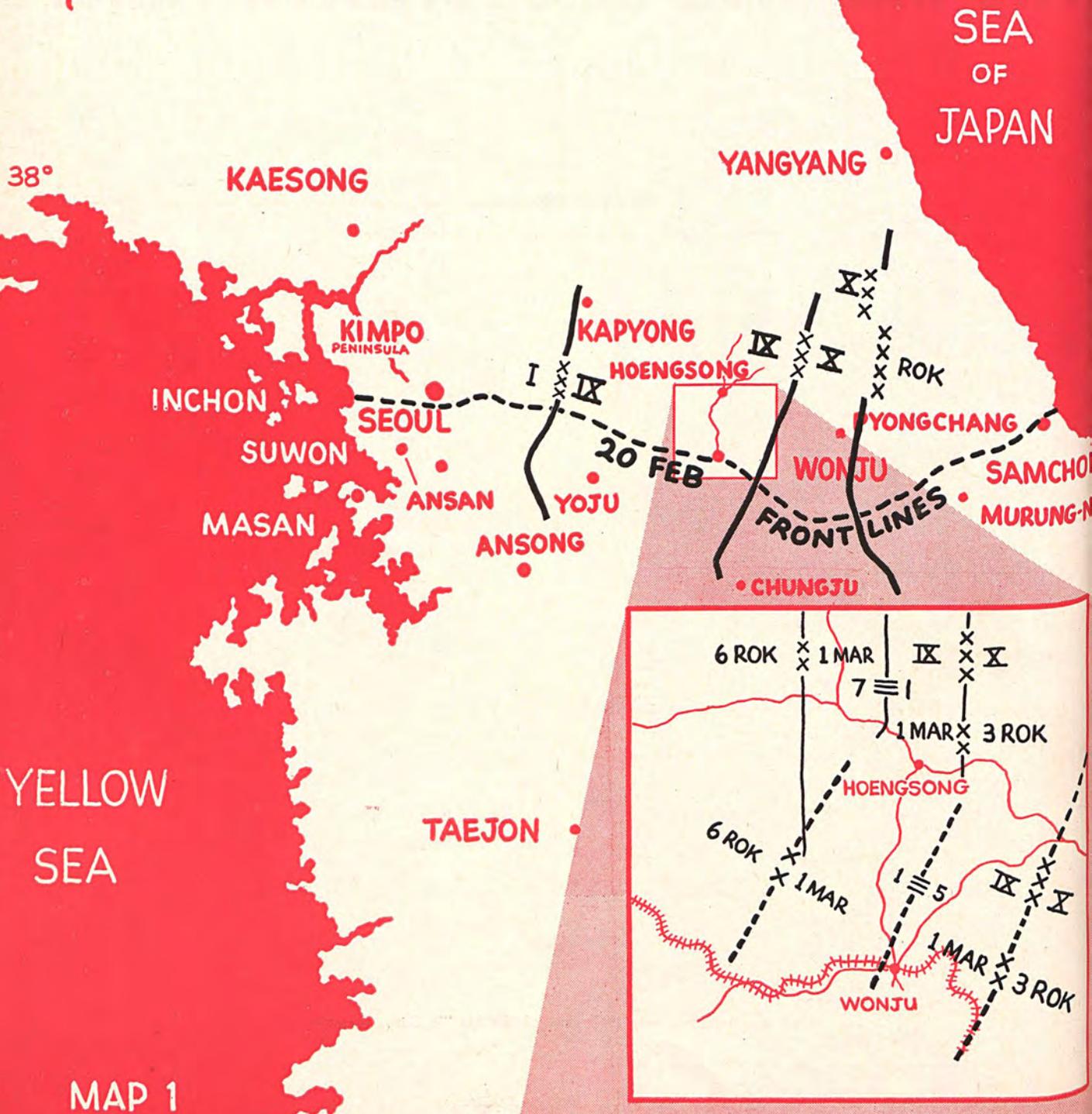
*By Lynn Montross*

Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps

Reprinted from February 1952 issue of The Marine Corps Gazette

# BUTTONING UP THE OFFENSIVE

## The Marines In Operation Killer



A TESTIMONIAL FROM THE ENEMY IS ALWAYS GRATIFYING, even though it be given grudgingly. And after ending a month's anti-guerrilla operation on 15 February 1951, the 1st Mar Div captured a North Korean courier two days later with a communication paying a reluctant tribute to the Leathernecks.

The intercepted message had been sent by the Chief of Staff of the II Corps of the North Korean People's Army. It was intended for MajGen Lee Ban Nam, CG of the NK 10th Div—the guerrilla force which the Marines had been hunting in the Pohang-Andong area—and the G-2 translation read in part as follows:

"Get all of your troops out of the enemy encirclement and withdraw to the north of Pyongchang without delay. In case it is impossible to get your troops out of the trap, you may stay in the rear of the enemy and attack their rear positions." But this possibility could not have gleamed very brightly, for the message ended on a dubious note, "Do your best to get out of the enemy line."

Unhappily for North Korean purposes, there was not much left of the NK 10th Div to be salvaged. About 60 per cent of the original 6,000 to 8,000 troops had been destroyed, according to a Marine estimate. During the process the 1st Mar Div had chopped the remnants into small groups driven into hiding by day and flight by night. So hard-pressed was the enemy that a dozen minor roadblocks were the main achievements of a month's guerrilla operations behind the United Nations lines.<sup>1</sup>

The wreck of the NK 10th Div retained some nuisance value, of course, as long as the half-starved survivors were skulking in remote mountain areas. But the enemy had few other capabilities left to him, and it was believed that an understrength ROK division could handle the situation after relieving the Marines.

On 16 February, in accordance with Eighth Army orders, the 1st Mar Div began its move to the Chunju sector in the center of the UN line. At this time the division was made a part of IX Corps, commanded by MajGen Bryant E. Moore.

The Chungju move was a turning point for the Marines in more ways than one. In such past operations as Inchon-Seoul and the Reservoir, the division had been the best trained and most experienced major unit of X Corps. Naturally it had taken part as the landing force of amphibious assaults and spearhead of offensives. Even in the Pohang guerrilla chase, the division had been in effect a self-sufficient little army, carrying out its own special mission.

<sup>1</sup>An article in last month's MARINE CORPS GAZETTE was devoted to the Pohang guerrilla hunt. Previous Marine operations in Korea have been described in GAZETTE articles appearing in consecutive issues from June to December, 1951.

by Lynn Montross

In cooperation with the Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, the GAZETTE herewith presents another in a series of official accounts dealing with Marine operations in Korea. Prepared by writers and researchers of the Historical Division, these articles are based on available records and reports from units in Korea. Also to be treated in this series:

Operation Ripper  
The Chinese Counteroffensive of April

Publication is scheduled for consecutive monthly issues. Admittedly it is too soon to write a definitive history of Marine fighting in Korea. Not only are enemy sources lacking, but even Marine and Army records are still incomplete. Articles of the length to be used in the GAZETTE, moreover, do not allow space for more than an outline of operations which will ultimately be given the detailed treatment of a monograph.

But timeliness is also an end to be sought, and these preliminary narratives are based on Marine and Army reports received up to this time. These articles are presented in the hope that GAZETTE readers will feel free to add to the incomplete record. This is an invitation, therefore, for you to supplement the existing record. Send your comments and criticisms, as well as any other information you can make available, to the Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, Washington 25, D. C.

All this was changed now. Henceforward the 1st Mar Div would be a unit of one of the largest and most cosmopolitan armies in which Leathernecks have ever served.

The United Nations establishment of February included units from 12 countries—Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Greece, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

Most of these contingents, ranging from company to battalion strength, consisted of picked men who gave a good account of themselves in action. It might also have been noted that the Eighth U. S. Army itself had undergone a transformation since the late summer of 1950, when the Marines had the fireman's role in the Pusan perimeter.

At the outset the Communist aggression in Korea found the democratic world unprepared. The first U. S. Army troops were sent straight from occupation duty in Japan to the firing line. Many of these men were soft physically and lacking in combat training. No soldiers of American history, in fact, ever drew a much more rugged assignment than the Army outfits thrown into action piecemeal during the early weeks.

Even during the two great Eighth Army withdrawals, there was little room for censure at the platoon level. A well-known military critic, making a first-hand survey of the U. S. 2d Inf Div retreat of November 1951, found "countless examples of extraordinary initiative and high individual courage . . . but none of utter dereliction or miscreancy."<sup>2</sup>

Of 16 infantry company actions examined in detail during this survey, only a single platoon appeared to have



yielded ground for any cause less serious than exhaustion of ammunition. And in the exceptional case, only 11 men were left unhurt in a routed platoon which brought off its own wounded.

Barely five weeks after the November retreat, the Eighth Army was hit by another CCF counteroffensive launched on the last night of 1950. Again the attackers smashed through a sector held by weary and thinned ROK divisions, so that the other major units had to withdraw to avoid envelopment.

❖ INCHON AND SEOUL WERE ABANDONED to the enemy by UN forces which had fallen back about 200 miles from 1 December to 10 January. Such a record would not seem to offer stimulating food for morale, yet the Eighth was by no means a beaten or disheartened army. It was, on the contrary, a confident and aggressive army made up of combat-wise troops who had met the test of adversity.

The proof came when the new commander, LtGen Matthew B. Ridgway, began a rapid-fire series of Eighth Army offensives only a few days after the retreat ended. At this time the UN Forces held a line extending from the vicinity of Ansong on the west coast through Chechin and Marung-ni to the east coast. The Eighth Army was disposed with I Corps on the left, IX Corps in the left center, X Corps in the right center and on the right the battle-worn ROK Army.

❖ THE FIRST OFFENSIVE OPERATION began on 15 January. A I Corps task force, spearheaded by a U. S. infantry regiment, drove nearly to Suwon without meeting serious opposition.

This reconnaissance-in-force ended on the 17th. Five days later a IX Corps task force, probing northward in that sector, also encountered few enemy troops.

The Eighth Army command lost no time at exploiting the CCF reluctance to engage. A new operation began on 25 January as another reconnaissance-in-force, but this time I and IX Corps employed a division each. The advance was in multiple columns "for the purpose of seeking out the enemy and inflicting the greatest possible damage."

Suwon and its airport were captured the next day. The pace was slow and methodical, with all units keeping close lateral contact and mopping up pockets of resistance before proceeding. More and more troops were committed until the operation could no longer be called a reconnaissance-in-force. It had turned into a full-scale offensive for the purpose of gaining and holding ground as well as destroying enemy forces.

Each day until the end of the month saw limited gains made and an estimated several thousand enemy killed.

<sup>2</sup>S. L. A. Marshall: *CCF in the Attack*, Operations Research Office, the John Hopkins University, Far East Command.

Thus on 1 February the UN front lines ran from vicinity of Ansan on the west coast through Kumpoju and Wonju before dipping in a southeasterly direction to the east coast.

Not only was the advance continued in the I and Corps sectors, but a new limited offensive was planned for 5 February in the zones of the U. S. X Corps and ROK Corps. This meant that the entire Eighth Army would be committed along a 70-mile front, with the I, IX, and X Corps in line from west to east. Still farther to the east were the three understrength corps of the ROK Army.

The 1st Mar Div was in Eighth Army reserve along with the Philippine 10th RCT and the Belgian and Canadian battalions. By this time the Leathernecks had pinned down the largest body of Communist troops infiltrate into UN rear areas after the January retreat. During the operation the 1st Mar Div managed to train 3,387 replacements who arrived in January and the first week of February to relieve the hundreds of veterans selected for departure in accordance with rotation policies. These new men were given combat instruction by being sent on self-sufficient patrols which ranged far into remote mountain areas to track down groups of NK guerrillas.

❖ SO MUCH PROGRESS was shown during the first two weeks of the Pohang-Andong guerrilla hunt that the Eighth Army inquired when the Marines could conclude the operation. MajGen Oliver P. Smith, CG 1st Mar Div, replied on 5 February that he could be ready whenever a relieving force was assigned the responsibility for the area.

The question of a new sector for the division had already been discussed late in January, when Gen Ridgway asked Gen Smith to confer with him at Suwon. The Eighth Army commander had considered using the

Patrol observation and reconnaissance were to be stressed



Mar Div north of Wonju on the central front or along the east coast in place of I ROK Corps. Gen Smith was asked to submit recommendations, and after consulting with his staff he replied on 2 February that various factors favored the employment of the Marines on the east coast.

Most of these factors derived from the capabilities of the division as the single major unit of Eighth Army which was fully trained and equipped for amphibious warfare. If such an operation were to be desired at some future date, the Marines could mount out from the east coast with a minimum of logistical friction. With their organic ANGLICO (Shore Fire Control Parties and Tactical Air Control Parties), they had the organization and know-how for making the most of naval gunfire and carrier air support. Finally, they could be supplied from the sea; and their Shore Party specialists would be able to develop port facilities for the support of the division.

After receiving Gen Smith's message, CG Eighth Army directed his staff to plan for employing the 1st Mar Div on the east coast. Nearly two weeks later, however, he summoned the Marine general to Taegu on 12 February to discuss the possibility of using the division on the central front.

The date is significant. For it was within the last 24 hours that the enemy had reacted to Eighth Army pressure with a large-scale counterattack which threatened to wipe out UN gains on the central front.

This was the first serious block thrown at the UN forces rolling steadily northward as one limited offensive followed another. In the X Corps sector, it is true, the new drive of 5 February had found hard going after the early

sputs. But I and IX Corps continued to advance, and on the 10th resistance seemed to collapse west and south of Seoul. The U. S. 25th Inf Div, pushing ahead 11,000 yards that day, secured the port of Inchon and Kimpo Airfield. Months of rebuilding would be required, however, before the air base could be made operational or the destroyed harbor facilities even partially restored.

☛ ON THE MORNING OF THE 11TH, Seoul was within sight of UN forces occupying the south bank of the Han. But that sub-zero night dated the violent counterattack launched by elements of the CCF 40th and 66th Corps and NK V Corps in the Hoengsong area of the U. S. IX Corps front. The enemy effort followed a familiar pattern. Two ROK divisions were overwhelmed by the first CCF blows, and their retreat made it necessary for other UN units to withdraw. As a consequence Hoengsong had to be abandoned on the 12th to the Communists hammering out a salient in the direction of Wonju.

Reports of UN reverses were coming in that day as Gen Ridgway conferred with Gen Smith about the next mission of the 1st Mar Div. The Eighth Army commander recognized the advantages of committing the division to the east coast, where it would be in readiness for amphibious operations. But he considered the Seoul-Yoju corridor the logical avenue of a major CCF offensive; and he wished to have the Marines, as "the most powerful division in Korea," relieve the 24th Inf Div in the Yoju area of the X Corps sector.

Gen Smith, upon his return from the conference, put the logistical problems up to his staff. But there was to be no Yoju mission. Further UN losses of ground occurred south of Hoengsong the next day, and Eighth Army plans were changed again. On 13 February the 1st Mar Div received a warning order to be prepared to



Waiting for word to move out as enemy fire slows up.



move on 48 hours' notice either up the east coast or to Chungju. The latter seemed the more likely destination, since it was a road junction of the corridor on the central front which CCF forces might use for a great offensive.

Chungju it was. An Eighth Army operation order of the 15th directed the 1st Mar Div to occupy positions in that area, prepared either to defend or to conduct further operations under operational control of IX Corps. The 2d ROK Div relieved the Marines, and the move by road and rail to Chungju commenced.

A shortage of organic transport added to the complications. Although the 1st Mar Div had taken pride in bringing its equipment out from the Reservoir, the reward of virtue was a collection of old and worn vehicles. As a further irony, other outfits which had lost their trucks were able to requisition new ones.

While the Marines were making their move, the CCF counteroffensive continued full blast along the central front. Units of the U. S. 2d Inf Div, surrounded in the Chipyeong area, put up a stout three-day fight until an armored column cut through to the rescue. The UN forces were not guided by any unrealistic concept of holding ground to the last ditch. They sold it dearly, however, by defending favorable terrain or even counter-attacking with the support of napalm air strikes. Nevertheless, the enemy had penetrated east of Wonju by the 17th, and another CCF column drove within seven miles of Chechon. These advances seemed to be for the purpose of relieving UN pressure on the Seoul area, but Eighth Army staff officers did not discount the possibility of an all-out CCF offensive on the central front to divide UN forces and sever vital supply lines.

As it proved, personnel losses and depleted supplies gradually brought the CCF attack to a standstill after it had driven a bulge into the central front. Gen Moore reported to Gen Ridgway on the 18th that one of his regiments had probed forward without meeting opposition. This intelligence was passed on to X Corps, farther east, and patrols in that sector also found evidences of a CCF withdrawal.

Gen Ridgway made a practice of giving the enemy no time for rest and recuperation. That very evening,

therefore, he planned Operation Killer—the fourth successive attack to be launched by Eighth Army units since their January retreat. (Map 1)

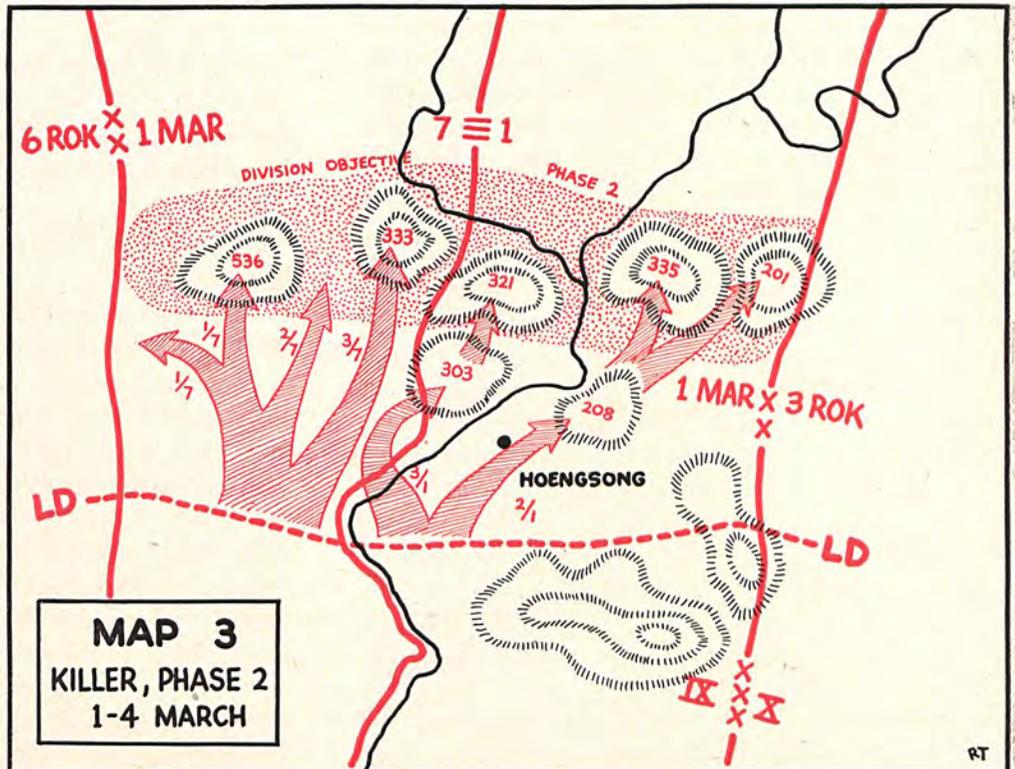
This new limited objective offensive, like its fore-runners, was designed to inflict maximum damage rather than to gain ground. Nevertheless, Gen Ridgway had determined to recover full possession of the hill mass north of Chungju. It was for this purpose, he informed Gen Moore on 15 February, that the 1st Mar Div had been employed.

"The force which holds Chungju," said Gen Ridgway, "has the situation in hand."

The overall scheme of maneuver called for the 1st Mar Div, as spearhead of the IX Corps advance, to relieve the 2d Inf Div and attack in a northeasterly direction through the Wonju basin from a line of departure north of Wonju. The object was to cut off enemy forces which had penetrated south and east of Hoengsong, and to recover control of the roads running eastward by seizing the high ground just south of the town.

Wednesday, 21 February, was set as D-day. The northwest flank of the 1st Mar Div was to be protected by the 1st Cav Div and 27th British Brig, including the Australian and Canadian battalions. And in the X Corps zone, on the east flank of the Marines, the 7th Inf Div was to make a simultaneous northerly advance up the Yongwol-Pyongchang road.

All these movements, in Leatherneck parlance, were to be coordinated in a tightly "buttoned up" offensive, with the forces keeping close lateral contact and maintaining the integrity of units. Patrol observation and reconnais-



sance were to be stressed, and even lack of opposition would not justify a unit in advancing ahead of schedule or by-passing hidden pockets of resistance.

The terrain of the Wonju Basin did not favor the attack. Rock heights, abounding in precipices, glowered down upon a region of narrow valleys and swift streams. The river Som, largest of all, ran from northeast to southwest through a defile cutting across the western part of the division area. Bordering this twisting stream was the main road, the Wonju-Hoengsong "highway" — a poor dirt trail even by Korean mountain standards. The only other road, crossing the eastern part of the area, was a narrow track scarcely fit for vehicular traffic.

It was believed that the enemy would make a strong stand at Hoengsong because of its value as the hub of roads in all four directions. The town served the enemy as a supply center; and a CCF division, the 196th of the 66th Corps, was reported to be dug in along the ridge to the south.

Gen Ridgway was on hand for the jump-off of the 1st Mar Div at 0800 on 21 February. On several previous occasions he had reiterated his basic directive to the Eighth Army. "We are fighting a numerically superior enemy," he was quoted as saying at a high-level conference of 16 February. "We must make up for it by good footwork, by maximum use of movement, combined with firepower."

These words might have been used to describe previous Marine operations in Korea. Although the Leathernecks were better known for their amphibious capabilities, they had demonstrated at Naktong Ridge, Seoul, and the Reservoir an unusual mastery of small unit operations, both offensive and defensive. The terrain in Korea and the techniques employed by the enemy made it primarily a small-unit war. At any time a battalion, a company, a platoon, or even a fire team might be compelled to become temporarily self-sufficient; and in these fights for survival, Marine maneuver and firepower paid big tactical dividends.

Operation Killer dated the first occasion in Korea when the 1st Mar Div took part as a unit of a large army making an advance in line on a wide front. But Marine doctrine did not stress self-sufficiency at the expense of co-



Terrain and weather gave more trouble than the enemy.

ordination; and the "buttoned up" attack had been a novelty in 1st Mar Div actions. Thus the division scheme of maneuver of 21 February envisioned an advance by two regiments in line, keeping close contact with each other and with the Army units on either side. (Map 2)

RCT-1, on the left of RCT-5, passed through elements of the 2d Inf Div and 187th Airborne RCT and attacked from a Wonju line of departure toward the high ground east of Hoengsong. Little opposition was encountered by RCT-1, with the 1st Bn leading, in an advance of four miles along the Wonju-Hoengsong road. The forward battalion dug in at dusk on high ground about three miles from the objective, and the 2d Bn moved up on the right. The night was uneventful except for the dispersing of two small enemy groups in the 1/1 area with mortar and artillery fire.

RCT-5 had meanwhile pushed its 1st Bn abreast of the position without contacting any enemy.

The same formation was used the next morning when that regiment again moved forward without meeting any resistance. It was a different story in the zone of RCT-1 where the 1st Bn was stopped by heavy automatic and small arms fire from Hill 166, the western knob of the ridge overlooking the Wonju-Hoengsong road. The regiment tied in for the night with the 2d Bn in readiness for joint assault. And in the morning, after a brisk artillery preparation, the two battalions launched a frontal attack.

By 0900 the 2d Bn had gained a foothold on the center and right of the ridge which permitted observation on Hill 166, the objective of the 1st Bn. Two effective air strikes

ere called on the position, which the 1st Bn secured at 15.

That afternoon both battalions jumped off to attack the ridge line. They met a stubborn resistance from CCF troops defending log bunkers with mortar, automatic, and small arms fire. The fight was hot and heavy for a few minutes, but elements of the 2d Bn decided it was seizing a portion of the ridge just to the left of the enemy bunkers. From this point they swept down the ridge line, overran the CCF mortar positions, and put the enemy remnants to flight. That night RCT-1 dug in on the high ground overlooking Hoengsong from the south.

RCT-5 pulled up abreast on the right to occupy three miles south of the town on the road leading east. The next morning that regiment met its first resistance when the 1st Bn stormed Hill 212 as the 2d Bn secured the high ground on the right flank. Meanwhile, in the zone of RCT-1, Marine tanks led a 1/1 combat patrol into Hoengsong itself.

Although the enemy had abandoned the demolished town, the two battalions of RCT-1 came under CCF mortar and artillery fire from the ridge to the north. Both battalions were shelled until counterbattery work by the 2d Bn and the 11th Marines silenced the enemy.

Thus the first phase of the Marine participation in Operation Killer ended with the assault regiments organizing their positions on the Corps objective and sending out patrols. RCT-7, in division reserve since D-day, had been patrolling the Wonju area and receiving the daily air-drops of supplies which were necessary to relieve the critical gasoline shortage.

FROM THE BEGINNING the logistical situation had given more trouble than the enemy. Heavy traffic had almost literally broken the back of the MSR, so that immediate and extensive repairs were required. Violent rains compounded the problem by turning rear area roads into quagmires, and streams into torrents. Marine engineers were needed for bridging in the forward areas, Division requested that IX Corps engineers be assigned to the maintenance of the MSR. It was also urged that indigenous labor be employed to assist in moving supplies. Otherwise the first phase of Operation Killer had ended unsatisfactorily. Eighth Army units on either side of the 1st Mar Div had made gains, and the Marine capture of Hoengsong on the 24th nearly wiped out the salient left by the recent CCF counteroffensive. That same day brought bad news, however, with the announcement of Gen Moore's death from a heart attack after an accident in which his helicopter crashed into the Han River.

Gen Smith was appointed to temporary command of IX Corps, and BrigGen Lewis B. Puller, his ADC, assumed command of the 1st Mar Div.<sup>3</sup> When announcing this decision, CG Eighth Army said, "General Smith is

to be taken into their hearts in IX Corps, and, by definite action, made to feel that he belongs there."

The next few days were devoted to planning and preparations to resume the attack on an enemy reported to be withdrawing northward. This intelligence led to Eighth Army changes in corps and division boundaries with a view to shifting the direction of attack from northeast to north. In the zone of the 1st Mar Div these amendments meant that RCT-5 on the right would be pinched out by the 3d ROK Div of X Corps. On the left, the zone was extended by bringing RCT-7 into line alongside RCT-1 as RCT-5 dropped back into reserve. (Map 1)

The 1st Mar Div was directed by IX Corps order to continue the advance on 1 March and secure the high east-west ridge about one and a half miles north of Hoengsong. The town occupied a valley at the confluence of two rain-swollen streams, so that a triangular area of low, flat ground lay between the abrupt hills on all sides. From the high ground of their first objective line, the Leathernecks could look across this soggy plain which stretched past Hoengsong to the ridge which must be taken in the second phase of Operation Killer. (Map 3)

Marine air support was on a new basis. In February the units of MAW-1 had returned to Korea, after a reconditioning period in Japan dating back to the Hungnam

<sup>3</sup>MajGen Edward A. Craig, until recently the ADC, had departed for CONLUS duty and was succeeded on 2 February by Gen Puller, formerly CO of RCT-1.

### Supporting arms never played a more important part.



evacuation. Upon their return to combat, the various squadrons came under direct Air Force control. This meant that Marine air would no longer be at the call of Marine ground troops according to Marine precepts. Instead, it would be directed by the Fifth Air Force through a central agency for the support of other Eighth Army units as well as the 1st Mar Div.

On 1 March there were six squadrons of MAW-1 in Korea. MAG-12 was represented by VMF-312 and VMF (N)-513, both based at Pusan. MAG-33 consisted of VMF-214 and VMF-323 (Pusan), VMF-312 (carrier-based), and VMF-311 (Pohang).

The 1st Mar Div scheme of maneuver for the new attack was conditioned by the terrain. For the ridge north of Hoengsong was separated by a bisecting road and stream into three distinct masses. The boundary between the two assault regiments passed through the central mass, so that RCT-7 had Hills 536 and 333 as objectives, and RCT-1 had Hills 321, 335, and 201.

☛ IT WAS APPARENT THAT RCT-7 had the harder task, since its zone contained the more rugged terrain in greater depth. It would be necessary for this regiment to take its first objectives, moreover, before RCT-1 could advance on the right without being held up by flanking fires from those heights.

Thus on 1 March, with the resumption of Operation Killer, the 1st Mar Div had probably the most difficult assignment in the Eighth Army. In the zone of I Corps the enemy grip south of the Han had been broken, and patrols found no signs that Seoul was being held in force. Enemy withdrawals were also indicated in the sector of X Corps, so that the UN front now stretched in a relatively straight and unbroken line from Inchon through Punwon-ni and Hoengsong to the east coast in the vicinity of Samchok.

☛ AGAIN THE 1ST MAR DIV was breaking ground for a new Eighth Army advance as the 2d and 3d Bns of RCT-7 attacked to seize the first hills west of Hoengsong. Little opposition was met at first from an enemy resisting briefly on each ridge before falling back to the next one. Both battalions pushed ahead about 1,000 yards before the 2d encountered heavy automatic and mortar fire. The CCF forces held an elaborate system of log bunkers along reverse slopes, but by nightfall the battalion had slugged its way to the forward slopes of the objective. Gains of about 1,500 yards were made in the zone of 3/7, where the enemy also put up a fierce resistance in prepared positions.

The day's encounters were a foretaste of those to come in the zone of RCT-7, where the terrain was too rugged in places for vehicles. Supporting arms never played a more important part. Marine tanks found lucrative targets among CCF strong points; Marine artillery fired 54

missions on 24 target areas; and Marine air flew 8 sorties.

On 2 March the other Marine assault regiment had its turn. Although the boundary lines had not been changed, the regimental commanders agreed upon a maneuver which 3/1 was to cross over into the 3/7 zone for a combined assault on the high ground along the west bank of the river Som. Gains in this quarter would permit RCT-1 to move across the Hoengsong plain against the hills in its zone.

Both battalions jumped off at 0800 and met astonishingly little opposition from an enemy who appeared to be using tactics of withdrawing at night to defend new ridge lines. Thus the two battalions secured their objectives by 0945 and finished mopping up at 1220. The 3d Bn of RCT-1 returned to its own zone for an assault on Hill 303, which fell to George Co at 1315 after another light resistance, though it took until 1600 to destroy CCF remnants dug in on the reverse slope.

The securing of the high ground west of Hoengsong enabled the 2d Bn of RCT-1 to cross the river behind tanks. After an intense rocket and artillery preparation the column drove through the town and advanced north east to seize Hill 208. The two assault battalions of RCT-7 were meanwhile advancing from a half to three-fourths of a mile in their zone.

On 3 March the assault troops of RCT-1 took their I Corps objectives against light to moderate resistance. The enemy made a determined stand on 2d Bn objectives Hills 201 and 335, but an air strike was called to evade the defenders while the 3d Bn advanced north to take Hill 321. Late that afternoon both battalions had reached the mopping-up stage when the 23d ROK Regt reported that one of its companies had been driven back, exposing the right flank of RCT-1. Able Co of the 1st Bn was brought up to hold Hill 335 while the 2d Bn moved over to protect the regimental right flank.

Btry K, 11th Marines in action near Chunchon.





“Do your best to get out of the enemy line”—Chief of Staff, NK Army

It was in the zone of RCT-7 that the enemy showed an almost suicidal resistance. The 1st Bn was summoned from reserve to attack Hill 536 and cover the regimental left flank while the 3d Bn continued its advance toward Hill 333. The 2d Bn, in the center, had the mission of assisting the other two with supporting fires.

Not only were the two hills natural fortresses, but both bristled with log bunkers and camouflaged mortar emplacements. It was a day of hard slugging for RCT-7, which lost most of the 14 killed and 104 wounded reported by the 1st Mar Div. By nightfall the 3d Bn had reached the ridge just south of Hill 333, but the 1st Bn met stiffer resistance and dug in about one and one-quarter miles short of Hill 536.

Engineers probe for antitank mines.



A tactical anticlimax is seldom disappointing to the assault troops, and the two battalions of RCT-7 which jumped off the next morning were pleasantly surprised to meet little initial resistance. Most of the Chinese had apparently withdrawn under cover of darkness, and the rest offered only delaying actions before abandoning Hills 333 and 536 in their retreat northward.

This was the final chapter of Operation Killer. It did not mean, however, that the fighting had ended on the central front. As usual, Gen Ridgway and his staff had been planning a new offensive before the old one ended.

Late in February it was decided to keep the enemy off balance by continuing the advance of IX and X Corps toward the 38th parallel. Another object was to outflank the Seoul area from the east, and the new plan would be known as Operation Ripper.

☛ THE SEOUL CORRIDOR and the central corridor by way of Hoengsong, Wonju, and Chungju were still considered the most probable routes for an all-out CCF offensive. By securing the hills north of Hoengsong, therefore, the Leathernecks of Operation Killer had placed the Eighth Army in much better position either for defense or the resumption of the offensive.

Marine losses had not been heavy in view of this outcome. The total of 393 battle casualties included 48 killed, 345 wounded, and two men missing in action. The enemy, it was estimated by division G-2, had 1,868 casualties—1,255 killed, 570 wounded, and 43 taken as prisoners.

☛ ON 5 MARCH, the day after Operation Killer ended, MajGen William H. Hoge, U. S. Army, arrived to take command of X Corps. Gen Smith, released from his temporary duty, resumed the command of the 1st Mar Div just as orders were received for Operation Ripper to begin on 7 March. Again the central front was to be the scene of the main line-bucking effort, and again the Marines were to carry the ball. USMC

*NEXT MONTH: The 1st Marine Division in Operation Ripper.*



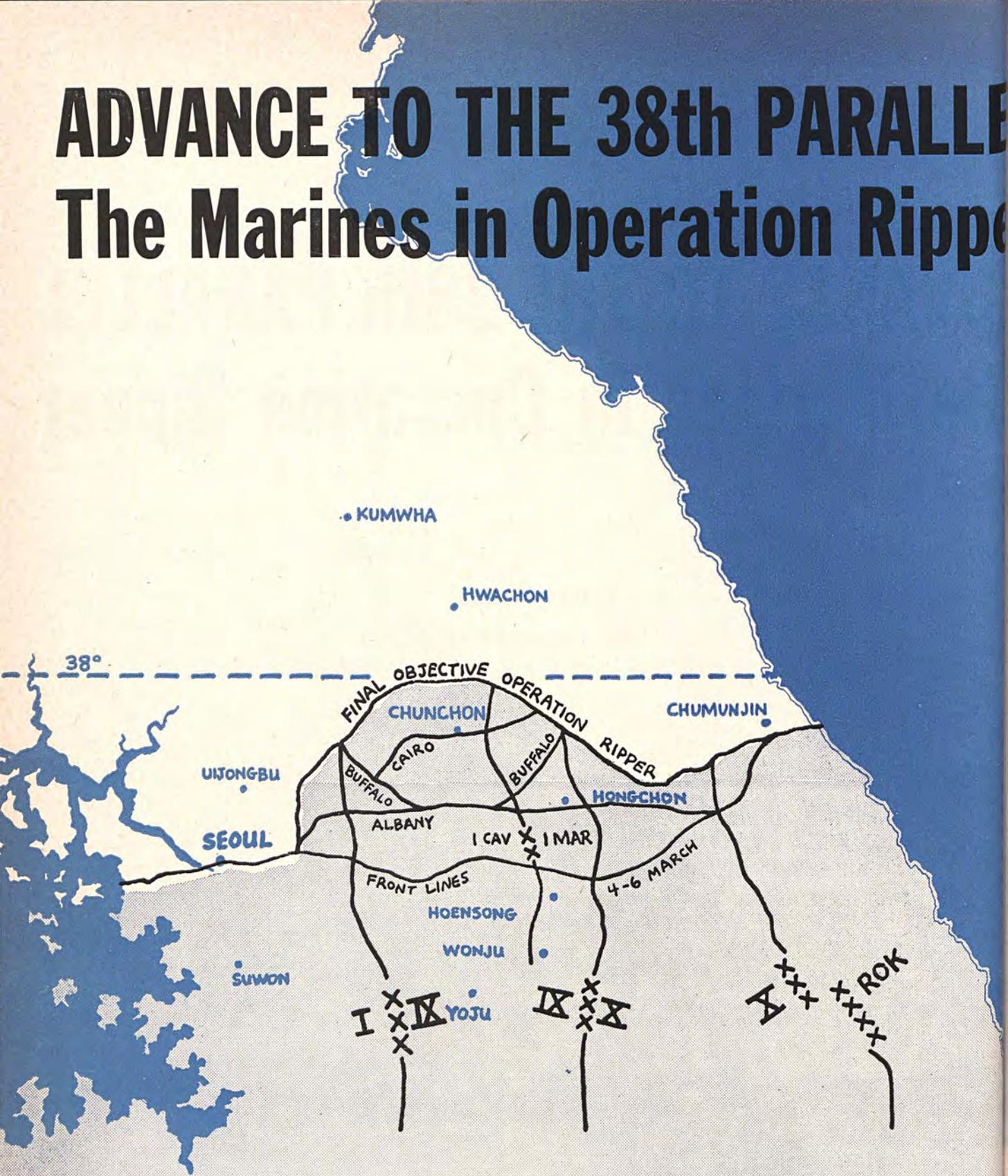
# **ADVANCE TO THE 38th PARALLEL** **The Marines in Operation Ripper**

*By Lynn Montross*

Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps

# ADVANCE TO THE 38th PARALLEL

## The Marines in Operation Ripper



MAP 1  
OPERATION RIPPER

\* AN OPERATION PER MONTH—THIS SEEMED TO BE the pace of the 1st Mar Div as part of the US Eighth Army in the first quarter of 1951. January and early February had dated the guerrilla hunt in the Pohang-Andong sector of southeast Korea. Then the Leathernecks moved up to the central front to spearhead the advance of X Corps from 21 February to 4 March in Operation Killer.\* Three days after the drive ended, the 1st Mar Div was scheduled to jump off again on D-day of Operation Ripper.

This attack was actually a continuation of Killer, with only a brief breathing spell for bringing up supplies and shuffling units on a front extending across the peninsula. The new drive, in fact, was the fifth consecutive offensive to be planned in rapid succession since 15 January by LtGen Matthew B. Ridgway, CG Eighth Army.

When he assumed the command on 26 December 1950, the Chinese Communist forces were poised for their second great counteroffensive in two months. It struck the Eighth Army in the paralyzing cold of New Year's Eve, and the collapse of major ROK units made a general withdrawal necessary to guard against envelopment.

Seoul and Inchon were abandoned to the enemy as the retreat continued through the first week of January 1951. These new losses of ground meant that the United Nations front was about 200 miles south of the line held late in November before the first CCF counteroffensive.

Nevertheless, the Eighth Army had put up a stout fight against the "human sea" tactics of a numerically superior enemy. There was no sense of failure, for all ranks realized that ground had been sacrificed rather than personnel. Morale and fighting spirit remained so keen that Gen Ridgway was able to launch his first offensive barely a week after the retreat ended. It was a reconnaissance-in-force conducted by a task force spearheaded by a reinforced RCT. Two other drives followed in rapid-fire order, each larger and more ambitious than its forerunner, until most of the UN combat forces were involved along the entire front.

This was the situation in the middle of February when the Eighth Army commander planned his fourth offensive, Operation Killer, while resisting a CCF counter-attack. All four drives had one thing in common. However much they might differ with respect to units and objectives, all were formulated in accordance with the basic directives announced by Gen Ridgway when he assumed command:

"Inflicting maximum casualties while sustaining mini-

\*These operations were the subjects of articles appearing in the last two issues of the MARINE CORPS GAZETTE. Previous Marine operations in Korea have been described in consecutive issues of 1951 from June to December.

In cooperation with the Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, the GAZETTE herewith presents another in a series of official accounts dealing with Marine operations in Korea. Prepared by writers and researchers of the Historical Division, these articles are based on available records and reports from units in Korea. Also to be treated in this series:

The Chinese Counteroffensive of April  
The Chinese Counteroffensive of May  
1st MAW in Inchon-Seoul Operation

Publication is scheduled for consecutive monthly issues.

Admittedly it is too soon to write a definitive history of Marine fighting in Korea. Not only are enemy sources lacking, but even Marine and Army records are still incomplete. Articles of the length to be used in the GAZETTE, moreover, do not allow space for more than an outline of operations which will ultimately be given the detailed treatment of a monograph.

But timeliness is also an end to be sought, and these preliminary narratives are based on Marine and Army reports received up to this time. These articles are presented in the hope that GAZETTE readers will feel free to add to the incomplete record. This is an invitation, therefore, for you to supplement the existing record. Send your comments and criticisms, as well as any other information you can make available, to the Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, Washington 25, D. C.

mum losses; maintenance intact of all major units; strict observance of lateral security."

The Marines had a word for it—"buttoning up" the offensive. But even though the primary objective of Operation Killer was the destruction of the enemy rather than gaining ground, Gen Ridgway attached great importance to control of the hill mass of the central front. For it was believed, on a basis of G-2 reports, that this corridor was a likely avenue of approach for the next great CCF counteroffensive.

The 1st Mar Div, therefore, had the mission of attacking northward from Wonju to Hoengsong (Map 1) in coordination with other IX Corps units while I Corps advanced on the left and X Corps and the ROK Army on the right. From 21 February to 4 March the Leathernecks fought their way forward methodically, paying strict attention to integrity of units and lateral security. The advance was in formation of "two up and one back"—two regiments in assault, with a battalion and regiment constituting the reserve.

Operation Killer was not the most dramatic fight of Marine Corps history. But it was good "war according to the book" which paid off in results. All objectives were taken on schedule with precision of maneuver and economy of means. At the finish, on 4 March, the 1st Mar Div occupied hills just north of Hoengsong after total losses amounting to less than a fourth of the estimated 1,868 casualties inflicted on the enemy.

The following day MajGen Oliver P. Smith was relieved of the temporary command of IX Corps he had been assigned when MajGen Bryant E. Moore died on 24 February from a heart attack. Gen Smith resumed

By Lynn Montross

his command of the 1st Mar Div after the arrival of MajGen William H. Hoge, USA, at IX Corps headquarters.

The success of Operation Killer had already led to Eighth Army plans, actuated by Gen Ridgway on 1 March, for a fifth offensive all along the UN front. The primary mission of Operation Ripper was to inflict as much destruction as possible, and by means of constant pressure to keep the enemy off balance in his build-up for another counteroffensive. A secondary purpose was to outflank Seoul and the area between that city and the Imjin River, thus compelling the enemy to choose between default and a defense on unfavorable terms.

The basic plan called for the drive of IX and X Corps toward the 38th parallel on the central front. Protection was to be given on the left flank by I Corps in the area south and east of Seoul, while the ROK Army maintained lateral security on the right with a partial northward advance.

Again, the rugged terrain of the central front was certain to multiply the difficulties of attack. Logistics were reduced to their most primitive terms in an area of many crags and few roads. The enemy had not neglected such defensive advantages in Operation Killer, and the Marines found themselves up against a succession

of hills bristling with log bunkers. Little attempt was made to hold these positions in force, and at night the Chinese usually fell back to the next height for more delaying tactics. Apparently the enemy was contenting himself with an elastic defense while bringing up supplies and reinforcements for his next counteroffensive.

On the eve of Operation Ripper the UN forces held a line extending from Inchon to the south of Seoul, then across the peninsula by way of Hoengsong, to the east coast in the vicinity of Chumunjin. (Map 1). Gen Ridgway's new offensive contemplated an advance by successive phase lines to drive a salient into CCF territory.

The IX Corps scheme of maneuver called for the 1st Mar Div to maintain lateral contact with the 1st Cav Div on the left, and the 2d Inf Div on the right. Hongchon and Chunchon, two of the main objectives of Operation Ripper, lay directly in the path of IX Corps. Both were important communications hubs, and Gen Ridgway's reports indicated that the enemy might make a determined stand. It was even considered possible that CCF withdrawals in Operation Killer had been planned to screen a counterattack to be launched from the Hongchon area.

The first phase line in the IX Corps zone was Albany

Firing in support of the 7th Marines' attack on Hill 356, one of the fortified heights overlooking Hongchon



representing about half the distance from the line of departure to Hongchon and line Baker (Map 2). Distance in this area, however, was conditioned by terrain; and it was a natural fortress of wooded hills and swift streams which confronted the 1st Mar Div. Highways were conspicuous by their absence, and extensive maintenance would be required to utilize the Hoengsong-Hongchon road as a MSR. So few and poor were the secondary roads that it would sometimes prove necessary for vehicles to detour along the rocky stream beds.

THE LAST OFFENSIVE had not developed major or prolonged resistance at any point. Yet that possibility, as well as a resumption of delaying tactics, had to be anticipated by Marine planners of Operation Ripper. At least the enemy units were old acquaintances, for the Leathernecks still faced the 66th CCF Corps, commanded by Gen Show Shiu Kwai. The 196th Div was on the left and the 197th on the right, with the 198th in reserve near Hongchon. These units were believed to comprise about 24,000 men. G-2 reports told a story of low morale. Many of the troops were former Chinese Nationalists impressed into Communist service, and supplies of food and clothing had been meager since crossing the 38th parallel.

The Leathernecks did not need the map to locate phase line Albany. It was indicated by Oum Mountain, a stark 930-meter peak about five and a half miles from the line of departure. The Hoengsong-Hongchon road, winding through Kunsamma Pass to the left, paralleled the boundary between the two Marine assault regiments, RCT-7 on the left and RCT-1 on the right (Map 2). They were to attack in line abreast, using all three battalions when the terrain permitted, while RCT-5 continued its patrolling activities in division reserve.

Operation Ripper began according to schedule all along the Eighth Army front on the morning of 7 March. The two Marine regiments encountered light resistance the first day, consisting of small arms and mortar fire. Again the enemy seemed to be up to his old tricks, putting up a limited defense with units ranging from platoon to company strength.

Fairly typical of the first day's operations was the experience of the Div Recon Co, which conducted a screening patrol from 0800 to 1500 on the right flank of RCT-1. Bursts of small arms and automatic fire were received from Chinese dug in on a hill, but they departed in such haste as to leave several cases of grenades behind. As the Marines proceeded, they were greeted by 10 or 12 rounds from a 60mm mortar in addition to small arms and automatic fire. After another interval, the enemy opened up with artillery—a single round of white phosphorus, followed by four or five harmless rounds of HE. Then the company was allowed to complete its mission without further trouble.

The effectiveness of CCF resistance on D-day may be judged from the total of seven wounded, representing 1st Mar Div losses, with all objectives occupied on schedule. This does not mean, of course, that the Leathernecks found easy going. The terrain itself was enough to demand the utmost in endurance from units maintaining strict lateral contact and mopping up all resistance before proceeding.

On the evening of D-plus-two, after total gains of about two and a half miles, the two Marine regiments were halted by Corps orders to wait for the 2d Inf Div to advance on the right. Stiffer resistance had slowed up the Army assault troops, and Marine operations of the next two days were limited to patrolling.

The 1st Mar Div jumped off again at 0800 on the 11th toward line Albany, meeting the same light and scattered opposition. A division G-2 analysis concluded that these "hit and run tactics" were probably intended to wear down UN forces until the enemy could launch his long expected counteroffensive with more heavily armed troops training in Manchuria.

At any rate, the two Marine regiments slugged their way forward methodically until most of the units reached line Albany on 12 March. The enemy withdrew from many positions without resistance, yet a 3/1 patrol had a hot fire fight with two CCF platoons on Hill 549. After destroying five log bunkers with grenades, the patrol called on the 11th Marines for artillery fires, which finished the job.

The first phase of Operation Ripper ended for the Marines on 13 March, when line Albany was completely occupied. And though the terrain discouraged maneuver, the tanks of the 1st Tank Bn knocked out CCF positions on several occasions with 90mm fires.

Again, as in Operation Killer, Marine air operations were directed by the Fifth Air Force. Thus the planes of the 1st Mar Air Wing supported other Eighth Army units as well as the 1st Mar Div. Two groups participated during Operation Ripper. MAG-12, flying from Pusan, included VMFs 214, 312, and 323 as well as VMF (N)-513. Based at Pohang were VMFs 212 and 311 of MAG-33.

At the front the situation was aggravated by spring thaws and rains which turned roads into bogs. The difficulties might have grown more serious except for the new Civil Transport Corps.

This organization of porters was made up of friendly Koreans of the ROK National Guard who lacked the training for military duties. There was no lack of willing indigenous labor, for the auxiliaries received pay as well as rations and clothing. Formed into companies they were equipped with the wooden "A-frames"—so-called because of their shape—used in Korea as a pack harness.



The Civil Transport Corps soon proved to be a boon for the Eighth Army as well as the Korean porters, each of whom could carry from 60 to 75 pounds of supplies over terrain too rugged for motor vehicles or even carts. Several hundred were attached to each Marine regiment during Operation Ripper, and many of them became devoted to their own Leatherneck outfit. When transferred to some strange unit, they were capable of showing their loyalty by returning after a weary hike across the mountains.

The highly-mechanized Eighth Army was thus reduced at times to the world's oldest form of transport as Operation Ripper went into its second phase on 14 March. Gen Ridgway had recently advanced his tactical CP from Suwon to Yaju as the front moved northward. Here he conferred with Gen Hoge as to the possibilities of using maneuver instead of frontal assault in the forthcoming attack on Hongchon.

This important IX Corps objective was believed to be the supply center for the CCF 39th and 40th Corps, which had conducted the enemy's counterattacks of February. Gen Ridgway asked the new IX Corps commander to prepare a plan for working around the flanks in a double envelopment. Such methods had been used successfully in recent small-unit operations, and IX Corps had a prospect of bagging large numbers of enemy troops.

Gen Hoge acted promptly and a IX Corps operation directive of the 13th named the 1st Cav Div and 1st Mar Div for the Hongchon envelopment. The next morning, as IX and X Corps jumped off from line Albany toward line Buffalo, the 1st Mar Div retained the same formation—RCT-7 on the left and RCT-1 on the right, with RCT-5 in reserve. Again the division maintained lateral contact with the 1st Cav Div to the west and the 2d Inf Div to the east.

Flash floods had recently added to the troubles of the Leathernecks, increasing the difficulties of road maintenance and making it a problem to find a dry bivouac area. The enemy put up less resistance than the weather when the two assault regiments renewed the attack at 0800 on the 14th. RCT-7 occupied its objectives without once calling for air or artillery support, and RCT-1 received only sniper fire. Division casualties for the day amounted to a total of six men wounded.

Reports of light opposition met by other IX and X Corps units were overshadowed by the news from Seoul—a patrol of the 1st ROK Div had entered the former ROK capital on the 14th to find it undefended. One of the objectives of Operation Ripper, it will be recalled, was to outflank the area, thus forcing the Chinese to choose between withdrawal and fighting at a disadvantage. The enemy had made his decision, and I Corps units took over a devastated city with some 200,000 civilians still existing in the ruins. Dead power

lines dangled over buildings pounded to rubble, and even such landmarks as the enormous brass-studded red gates of the embassy compound had been obliterated.

It was the fourth time that Seoul had changed hands in nine months of war. Air reconnaissance established that the enemy had pulled back about 15 miles to entrenched positions in the Uijongbu area. Gen Ridgway enlarged the mission of I Corps accordingly by directing a new advance on the left of IX Corps.

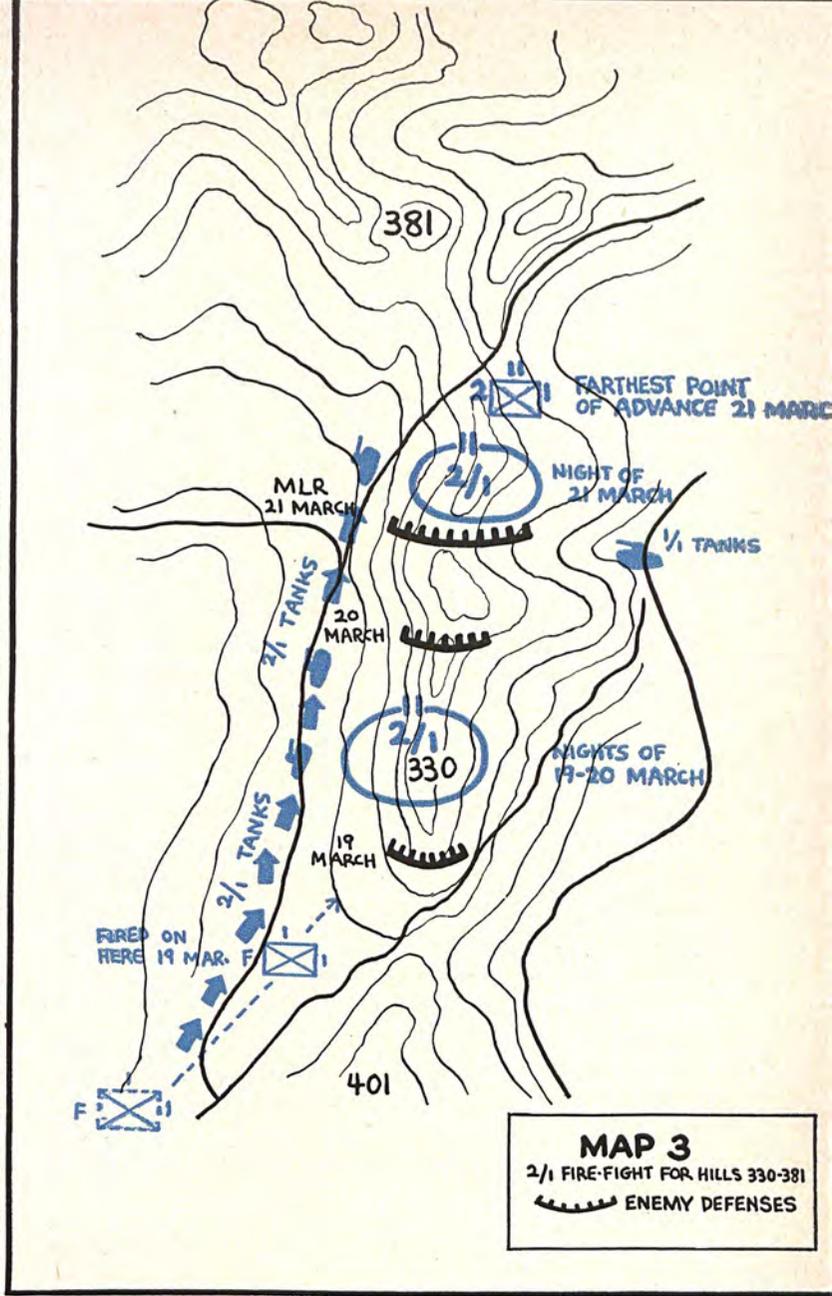
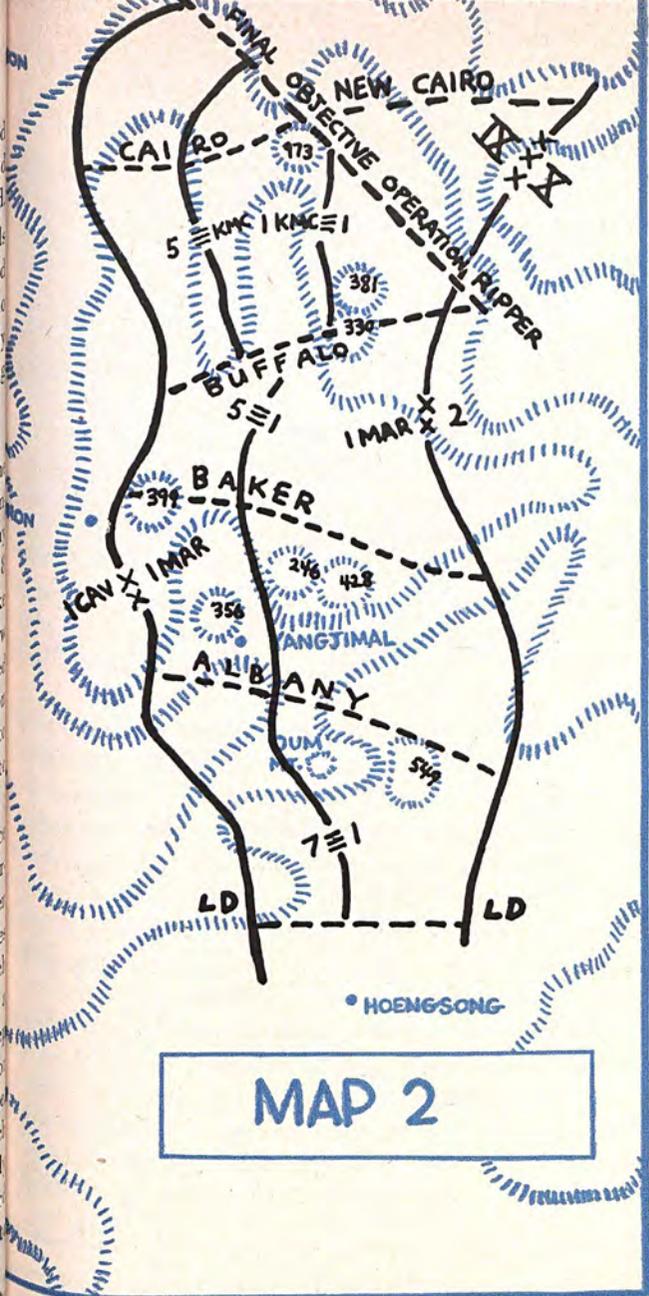
☛ EVIDENCES OF CCF WITHDRAWALS only added to the conviction of Eighth Army staff officers that a great counteroffensive was in the making. No less than 4,630 enemy vehicles had been sighted by Air Force planes from 8 to 12 March—the largest number to be reported in a like period since Gen Ridgway began his offensives. Few of these resupply and reinforcement efforts were observed in the eastern sectors of the UN front. One concentration was directed toward the northern approach route to Seoul, and on the central front the vehicles appeared to be converging toward Chunchon.

Enemy delaying tactics showed an increasing reliance on road mines. Artillery shells were buried for the purpose, and the Chinese also packed explosives in wooden or pottery containers to avoid detection. Sudden changes of spring weather made for freakish variations which baffled the engineers. Thus a tank might pass over a frozen road in the morning without harm, while a jeep would be blown sky-high that afternoon if a rain or thaw softened the earth and made the mine more sensitive.

The enemy was equally unpredictable. On 14 March the Marines' advance of two to three miles had scarcely been opposed. But on the 15th, while driving on toward line Baker, the two assault regiments ran suddenly into their stiffest resistance of Operation Ripper.

Three heights had been fortified by the Chinese to defend Hongchon from the east and southeast—Hill 356 in the zone of RCT-7, and Hills 246 and 428 in the path of RCT-1 (Map 2). The slopes were studded with pill boxes and log bunkers giving overhead protection, while the camouflaged mortar emplacements were located to provide mutually supporting fields of fire.

Field reports are a little vague as to what happened to the Hongchon envelopment. Apparently, however, the plans were changed at the last minute because of intelligence that the enemy had pulled out of the heavily bombed town. At any rate, the 1st Bn of RCT-7 entered Hongchon without a fight on the 15th, then passed through constant artillery fire and enemy-defended high ground overlooking the town from the northwest. The real struggle came when the other two battalions attacked Hill 356. Chinese mortar fire was so well aimed that three out of six 81mm mortars were knocked out in the 3d Bn mortar platoon. The attacking Leathernecks were



Battalion staff watches as artillery works over enemy strong points before the Leathernecks jump off.



also pounded with artillery fire, and at dusk they had barely won a foothold while the enemy still clung to his main positions.

An intricate maneuver featured the assault of RCT-1 on the two hills in its zone. The 2d Bn was ordered to swing from the regimental right flank, where no enemy were encountered, to the extreme left. In order to execute the shift, the battalion had to circle to the rear, then move by truck up the MSR and through the zone of RCT-7 to the village of Yangjimal. Dismounting there at 0925, the men began a difficult march across broken country toward Hill 246. At 1230, after receiving CCF mortar fire, the column deployed and attacked in conjunction with the assault of the 3d Bn on Hill 428.

The enemy, defending heavy log bunkers, sometimes held his small arms and automatic fire until the Leathernecks came within 100 feet. At times the fighting was at such close quarters that no supporting weapons except 60mm mortars could be used, and the terrain was too rough for the approach of tanks.

The 2d Bn secured Hill 246 by 1700 and dug in for the night. Hill 428 was a harder nut to crack, and the 3d Bn withdrew from the forward slope to resume the assault in the morning. During the night the enemy withdrew, however, and RCT-1 advanced to line Baker without a fight the next day.

Another hard action awaited RCT-7 on the 16th, when the 1st Bn moved up to line Baker. The Chinese resisted on Hill 399 so stubbornly that the Marines had to drive them out of their bunkers with bayonets and grenades. Meanwhile the wrecked town of Hongchon was being secured as Marine engineers began the task of clearing the airstrip.

Recent intelligence reports indicated that the CCF 66th Corps, opponents of the Marines since the outset of Operation Killer, was being relieved after frightful personnel losses. Prisoners taken on 17 March identified their unit as the CCF 39th Corps and declared that the 66th was being withdrawn to North Korea for recuperation.

☛ CORPS ORDERS were received for the 1st Mar Div to attack on the 17th from line Baker to Buffalo. The division plan of maneuver called for RCT-5 to pass through and relieve RCT-7 while RCT-1 continued to advance on the right.

All the way to the objective the assault troops met such light resistance that another large-scale CCF withdrawal seemed in progress. By the 20th, five of the six Marine battalions had reached line Buffalo after encountering only sniper fire and a few mortar shells. Enemy opposition was reserved for the 2d Bn of RCT-1, which had a lively fight to take Hill 330, located on the objective line itself.

No enemy had been sighted by RCT-1 until the 19th when Fox Co ran into small arms bursts from the nose of this long, narrow ridge running north and south (Map 3). Unusually heavy log bunkers gave the Chinese good protection, and it was lucky for the Leathernecks that the terrain permitted tank maneuver. While Fox Co organized for the assault, a platoon from Baker Co of the 1st Tank Bn demonstrated how valuable tank support could be. Sweeping up the valley to the left of the ridge, the tanks neutralized CCF positions with their shells. Under cover of this flanking fire, Fox Co was able to work its way up to the top without losses.

The battalion dug in that night on Hill 330. Three probing attacks were received before daybreak from the enemy apparently trying to withdraw without getting his tail feathers singed. Later it was learned that these efforts were made to cover the relief of CCF 39th Corps units by North Koreans of the V NK Corps.

Two Marine patrols, working forward along the ridge, ran into so much fire on the 20th that they were pulled back. The final assault was put off until the next day when it demonstrated the terrific wallop packed by coordinated Marine arms. An artillery barrage preceded the infantry jump-off, and an air strike also pounded enemy positions. Then, as the infantry attacked along the ridge line, tanks moved forward on each side to fire on every bunker showing signs of life.

Panic seized the North Koreans, who sought an escape down the east slope, only to be wiped out by the tanks on that side. By 1315 the Leathernecks had overrun the enemy's main line of resistance without a single casualty. Here they were astounded by the spectacle of an NK officer buried alive by a shell burst, with other

Hongchon's hills bristled with pillboxes and bunkers.





The regiments methodically slugged their way north.

his hand waving feebly when the Marines arrived on the scene to dig him up unhurt.

As Easy Co continued along the ridge line, two men were wounded late in the afternoon. This was the extent of 2d Bn casualties for the day, and the total for three days of fighting added up to one killed and 12 wounded. Enemy losses for the same period were estimated at 213 killed, of whom 53 were counted. The number of wounded could not be ascertained, for the NK remnants abandoned Hill 318 that night and retired northward.

This fight delayed the RCT-1 advance when the Eighth Army jumped off on 20 March from line Buffalo to lines Cairo and the final objective (Map 1). The 1st Mar Div was now able to operate on a front of three regiments, having been reinforced by the 1st Korean Marine Corps Regt. Before the Inchon landing, this regiment had been organized and trained by officers and NCOs from the US Marine Corps. Made up entirely of volunteers, the unit served with distinction in the Inchon-Seoul operation and in northeast Korea after the Wonsan landing.

The aggressive KMC Regt showed what could be accomplished by ROK troops with the proper training and equipment. The spirit of the outfit shines forth from instructions written in his own English by the S-3, Lt Kim Sik Tong, in the periodic operation report for 24 March:

"The KMC ideal is to complete the mission, regardless of receiving strong enemy resistance, with endurance and strong united power, and always bearing in one's mind the distinction between honor and dishonor."

The regiment lived up to this high ideal in its attack on Hill 975—the hardest fight of the 1st Mar Div advance. Before RCT-1 secured Hill 381, the KMC Regt and RCT-5 jumped off on the 20th. The latter reached line Cairo the next evening, having met little resistance, and on the left

the 1st KMC Bn pulled up alongside the next morning. RCT-1 reached the final objective on the 23d after driving NK troops out of prepared positions. The 2d KMC Bn also had to slug its way forward, but it was the 3d Bn which had the struggle. The assault on the key enemy position lasted through the day on the 23d, and not until 0300 the next morning was Lt Kim Sik Tong able to record that "our indomitable [sic] spirit which finally recaptured Hill 975 after hand and hand combat . . . will brilliantly decorate our KMC history."

Although the 1st Mar Div had secured its objectives by the 24th, IX Corps ordered a further advance to a new Cairo line on the 26th. This was an eastward extension of the old line to the boundary between IX and X Corps. (Map 2). There was no need for RCT-5 to advance, and RCT-1 and the KMC Regt moved up to the new line on schedule without being opposed.

This was actually the finish of Operation Ripper according to its original conception. All of its main objectives had been taken by Eighth Army units who stood just below the 38th parallel. Average gains of about 50 kilometers had been made in three weeks, while "tremendous" casualties were being inflicted on the enemy.

Despite these successes, all signs pointed to the fact that the enemy had been fighting delaying actions while building up for a great counteroffensive. On 27 March a 1st Mar Div G-2 report contained translated excerpts from a speech by Gen Péng Teh Huai, reported to be the commander in chief of CCF and NK forces in Korea:

"We are forced to begin the 4th Battle Phase of military operations in Korea. This operation begins under unfavorable conditions because we are compelled to face it without a transitional period of sufficient preparation." Gen Huai added that the CCF tactics "will be very exacting for us, but through our painful efforts we can win. The enemy had become pessimistic and disappointed, while we are the winner. Let us go on until we liberate the whole of Korea! However, we need much material and ammunition."

☛ THE CERTAINTY OF A NEW CCF counterstroke caused Gen Ridgway to decide on maintaining the momentum of Operation Ripper. Although most of its aims were achieved, the mission of destroying enemy had been only partially completed. Rugged terrain and muddy roads had slowed up the mechanized Eighth Army in many instances, enabling the enemy to defend briefly with small units and withdraw to prepared positions.

Gen Ridgway's problem was two-fold. He wished to continue his forward movement, yet he had to be ready to stand on the defensive when the time came. As a dual solution, he published on 29 March a plan for a new Eighth Army advance to a line further north. Mountainous and almost roadless terrain on the east flank, the



Hwachon Reservoir in the center, and 23 kilometers of tidewater on the west flank made it possible to prepare a strong defense in depth on this new line.

New names were to be applied every few days to various phases of the new UN offensive, but it was in reality an extension of Operation Ripper, just as the latter had been a continuation of Killer. Actually the Eighth Army had been driving steadily forward, with only brief interludes, since 21 February. And as the troops jumped off again on 2 April, Gen Ridgway emphasized once more to commanders his familiar three basic tenets:

“Coordination, maximum punishment, and maintenance intact of major units.”

This was one of Gen Ridgway's last operations as CG Eighth Army. For on 14 April he was appointed commander in chief by President Truman to succeed Gen Douglas A. MacArthur, and LtGen James A. Van Fleet assumed command of the Eighth Army.

On 1 April the 1st Mar Div reverted to Corps reserve. The Marines were also directed by IX Corps to move to an assembly line south of Chunchon, which had been hastily abandoned late in March before an Eighth Army airborne assault could be launched to trap enemy troops. The 1st Mar Div was to be relieved by X Corps units and be prepared in turn to relieve the 1st Cav Div. Meanwhile, RCT-7 was to be attached to that Army division on 1 April.

Further IX Corps instructions the next day directed that RCT-1 go into Corps reserve at Hongchon while other units participated in the advance to line Ready. On the 3d, the KMC Regt and RCT-5 attacked toward this objective and secured it the following day. There the relief by X Corps units took place, being completed on 5 April.

RCT-7 was ordered by the 1st Cav Div to take over a sector on the west of the division zone after relieving elements of the 6th ROK Div and 8th Cav Regt. On 2 April the attack jumped off from line Dover, north of Chunchon. Three regiments in line, from left to right the 7th Mar, 8th Cav, and 7th Cav, advanced for three days without opposition. And on 4 April the Leathernecks were among the first UN troops to cross the 38th parallel.

It may have occurred to them that never before had a line of latitude acquired so much worldwide renown. The 38th parallel first came to international notice after the collapse of Japan at the finish of WW II. Originally it was designated by agreement as the boundary between Soviet and US zones of military occupation in Korea, but the Russians soon made it into a frontier between militant Communism and Democracy.

THE HISTORICAL LESSON may have been lost on the Marines, for it was at this point that they ran into heavy opposition. After a brisk fire fight the two forward battalions dug in for the night. They resumed the attack on the 5th, advancing more than a mile. But it took another effort the next morning to reach the 1st Cav Div objective, and in the process the men received about 500 rounds of enemy artillery fire.

Successes of the first few days in April led Gen Ridgway to publish on the 6th another operation plan designating new objectives to the northward. The purpose of advancing to a new phase line was to push beyond the Hwachon Reservoir and seize the approaches to the “Iron Triangle.” This strategic area, bounded by Kumhwa, Chorwon, and Pyonggang (Map. 1) is one of the few pieces of comparatively level real estate in all

Korea. Because of its network of good roads, the broad valley had been developed by the enemy as a supply and troop concentration center.

On 8 April, in preparation for the renewed effort, the 1st Mar Div (less RCT-1) was directed by Corps to relieve the 1st Cav Div and be prepared to attack to line Quantico and the new phase line beyond the Hwachon Reservoir. RCT-7 was to revert to division control on completion of this relief.

Although the 1st Cav Div had not secured all its

Co B of the 1st Tank Bn carrying men of the 5th Marines in the assault on Hwachon.



jectives, the 1st Mar Div took over on the 9th and 10th. From left to right the Marine regiments were RCT-7, RCT-5, and the 1st KMC Regt.

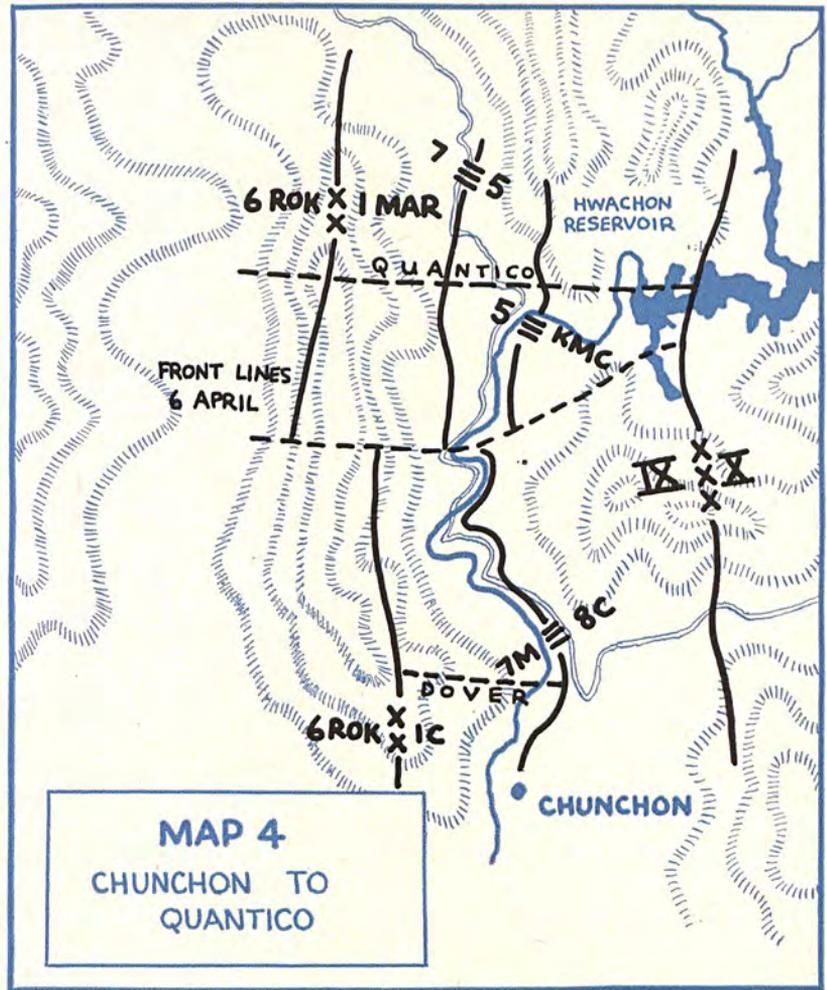
At this time the 7th Cav Regt was still attempting in the Hwachon Dam area to complete its seizure of assigned objectives before being relieved. The enemy had opened the flood gates on the 9th, causing the Pukhan River to rise four feet and depriving IX Corps for a few days of two floating bridges. An attack that day by the 7th Cav Regt failed to dislodge the enemy from the high ground south of the dam, and another assault failed on the 10th. A third attempt was made on the 11th, with the 4th Ranger Co assisting by crossing the lake above the dam in assault boats. Again the enemy positions were found too strong, and the Army elements were relieved on the 12th by the 1st KMC Regt as the 1st Mar Div assumed responsibility for the sector.

In view of commitments for the advance north of the Hwachon Reservoir, it was decided to postpone operations in the Hwachon Dam area until a stronger force could be assigned. During the following week the 1st Mar Div patrolled aggressively as positions were consolidated. Some hot fire fights took place in these operations, with the enemy using artillery on several occasions.

RCT-1 was permitted on 14 April to move up to the Chunchon area, though the regiment did not revert from Corps to division reserve until two days later. Boundary changes between the 1st Mar Div and 6th ROK Div on the left extended the Marine zone to the west, and on the 19th the division CP was advanced to Sapyong-ni, just south of the 38th parallel.

A HEAVY PALL OF SMOKE hung over the front these days as the enemy burned green wood to screen his preparations for a counterstroke. The time was believed to be near on 21 April as the 1st Mar Div attacked at 0700. The 5th and 7th Marines pushed northward from 5,000 to 9,000 meters without meeting any opposition, and the 1st KMC Regt occupied its objectives on schedule. Division casualties for the day consisted of one man wounded.

Similarly, gains by other IX Corps units pointed to enemy withdrawals. When the advance was renewed at dawn, the 1st Mar Div secured line Quantico against light resistance. RCT-5 seized the high ground dominating the Siphung-ni road, and on the left RCT-7 advanced about



5,000 yards. After forcing a crossing of the Pukhan River, the KMC Regt completed the seizure of the Hwachon Dam as the Div Recon Co sent patrols into the battered town of Hwachon.

This was the moment chosen by the enemy for his long expected counterstroke. The blow fell at 2215 on the night of 22 April in the sector of the Marines, who were informed that dangerous CCF penetrations had been made to their left in the zone of the 6th ROK Div. Before daybreak the withdrawal of ROK units had exposed the Leathernecks to envelopment, and elements of RCT-1 were brought up from reserve to protect the left flank. Division orders suspended the attack, and all units were directed to consolidate positions for defense.

US MC

*NEXT MONTH: The 1st Marine Division in the CCF counteroffensive.*

# MARINE AIR OVER THE PUSAN PERIMETER

*By Ernest H. Giusti*



Reprinted from May 1952 issue of The Marine Corps Gazette

# MARINE AIR OVER THE PUSAN PERIMETER



MAP 1

THE MARINE COMPANY COMMANDER HAD A CRITICAL problem on his hands. It was the second day of the bitter fighting for Obong-ni Ridge, and the attack of his right flank platoon was pinned down on a barren slope by deadly machine gun fire. The source of his trouble was a partially defiladed and well-emplaced enemy position which defied the efforts of ground supporting fire to destroy it. Without hesitation, he requested aid from another powerful, but more flexible, weapon at his disposal—Marine air.

In five minutes a Corsair plummeted down on the target. A 500-lb bomb struck only a hundred yards from the tense Marines, scoring a direct hit. The Marines left their scant cover and swept up the slope. As they passed over the target area, they found that the remarkably accurate Marine pilot had wiped out a nest of four machine guns with their crews. In another few minutes the Marines of the left flank platoon had wrested the important hilltop from the enemy.

This incident was not an isolated one. From 6 August to 5 September 1950, Marine aviation, flying in support of the 1st Prov Mar Brigade (reinf), carried out similar missions again and again. Variations were only of time, place, and target.

In the Pusan perimeter, Marine air, like other supporting arms, was committed primarily to the mission of assisting ground troops to move over more real estate faster and at a smaller cost in lives. And the gratifying results of its close air support were no accident.

IN THE YEARS BETWEEN WW II and the Korean conflict a large part of the Marine Corps' physical and materiel resources was poured into a great effort to perfect the Marine air-ground team. The lessons of close air support in the Solomons, the Philippines, and Okinawa were carefully studied, and new doctrines and techniques emerged. Emphasis on the training of Marine tactical squadrons swung rapidly toward the development of aviation as a closely coordinated arm of Marine ground forces.

At TTU Pac and TTU Lant, Marine aviators pursued intensive courses designed to train them as forward air controllers—the vital links which synchronize the air and ground components of the team. Other Marine aviators attended Marine Corps Schools at Quantico where they studied the problems and combat requirements of the infantry and its supporting arms. Here they learned the theory and practice of air support, and observed its application in practical demonstrations.

Meanwhile, the squadrons of the 1st and 2d Mar Air Wings constantly practiced air support with elements of the 1st and 2d Mar Divs. From El Toro and Cherry

By Ernest H. Giusti

In cooperation with the Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, the GAZETTE herewith presents another in a series of official accounts dealing with Marine operations in Korea. Prepared by writers and researchers of the Historical Division, these articles are based on available records and reports from units in Korea. Also to be treated in this series:

1st MAW in Inchon-Seoul Operation  
1st MAW at the Chosin Reservoir

Publication is scheduled for consecutive monthly issues. Admittedly it is too soon to write a definitive history of Marine fighting in Korea. Not only are enemy sources lacking, but even Marine and Army records are still incomplete. Articles of the length to be used in the GAZETTE, moreover, do not allow space for more than an outline of operations which will ultimately be given the detailed treatment of a monograph.

But timeliness is also an end to be sought, and these preliminary narratives are based on Marine and Army reports received up to this time. These articles are presented in the hope that GAZETTE readers will feel free to add to the incomplete record. This is an invitation, therefore, for you to supplement the existing record. Send your comments and criticisms, as well as any other information you can make available, to the Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, Washington 25, D. C.

Point, Marine aviators were sent to Camp Pendleton and Camp Lejeune. There they had the opportunity to observe and learn, at first hand, the problems of the infantry and the effectiveness of air support. They carried this experience back to their squadrons, and the effort to improve the quality of air support was unremitting.

Periodically, the air support proficiency of the two wings was tested in large scale maneuvers. During the intra-war period, wing units operating from carrier or land bases participated in maneuvers off the coast of California, in the Hawaiian Islands, in the Caribbean, and even under cold weather conditions in Alaska and Argentina.

So when the real test came, and aggressor X became the North Korean army and the dummy pillbox in the impact area at Camp Pendleton became a strong point holding up Marines on the road to Chinju, Marine pilots were ready. And they carried out their missions with such confidence and skill that even an observer unaware of their preparation must have guessed at their extensive training.

In the Pusan perimeter two carrier-based Marine squadrons, VMFs-214 and 323, and half of Japan-based VMF-513(N), made up wholly of regular Marines, comprised the tactical units of MAG-33 which preceded the bulk of the wing to Korea by approximately a month. These units, plus Ground Control Intercept Squadron-1, Tactical Air Control Squadron-2, and supporting units combined to give the group a strength of about 1,500.

The first news that Marine air units were to be committed came after the Korean conflict was only 10 days old. As early as 2 July, Gen Douglas MacArthur, com-





Corsair roars off *Sicily's* flight deck to support Marines fighting in Kosong area

mander of UN forces in the Far East, had requested a Marine RCT with appropriate air for employment in Korea. The Joint Chiefs of Staff approved this request on the same day. The 5th Marines of the 1st Mar Div was selected as the basic unit of the RCT-MAG force, and MAG-33 of the 1st Mar Air Wing as the air component.

On 5 July the Commandant designated the ground-air team as the 1st Prov Mar Brigade (reinf), and BrigGen Edward A. Craig was appointed CG. BrigGen Thomas J. Cushman was appointed CG of the reinforced air group.

Once more Marines were called upon to prove that the "ready to fight" quality attributed to the Fleet Marine Force was no myth—and they did. The brigade, including its air component, was formally activated on 7 July; loading began on the 9th, and on 14 July approximately 6,500 well trained ground and air Marines set sail for the Far East "ready to fight."

By the latter part of July the situation in Korea had reached a critical point. The enemy was threatening to break through the Pusan perimeter, and the Marines were needed urgently. Instead of staging through Japan, as had been originally planned, the ground elements of the brigade went directly to Pusan, arriving on 2 August. The air components continued to Japan by faster transportation and landed on 31 July.

VMF(N)-513 became land based at Itazuke, but VMF-214 embarked aboard the *USS Sicily* and VMF-323 aboard the *USS Badoeng Straits*, the two CVEs of Task Group 96.8, commanded by RAdm Richard W. Ruble,

USN. The *Sicily* was commanded by Capt John S. Thach and the *Badoeng Straits* by Capt Arnold W. McKechnie, two of the outstanding CVE "skippers" of the US Navy.

Immediately upon departure from Japan for Korea the CVEs launched combat air patrol sorties. Thereafter, whenever the carriers were at sea two Marine planes protected the task group throughout the daylight hours. Though combat air patrol sorties lowered the availability of strike planes, they performed a necessary task. Since there is frequently no wind off the Korean coast during August and September, planes often had to be launched and landed

with only a 20-knot wind across the flight deck. This was a serious handicap, and one of the duties of combat air patrol aircraft was to search for winds which could be utilized by the CVEs to make flight operations less hazardous.

The privilege of striking the first blow for the Marine Corps in the Korean conflict fell to a flight of eight VMF-214 Corsairs which bombed, rocketed, and strafed enemy concentrations at Chinju and Sandon-ni on 3 August—less than a month after receipt of official orders to the Far East. (Map 1)

Three days later VMF-323 staged a series of strikes against enemy troops, buildings, vehicles, bridges, supplies, and railroad installations, and on 7 August VMF(N)-513 joined the act with a strike against the town of Kumchon.

Exactly one month from the date of MAG-33's activation as the air component of the brigade, all three of its squadrons were engaged.

These first missions were interdiction and deep support efforts. But it was not long before the two carrier-based squadrons were called upon to give the type of close support to ground troops for which they had trained so long and so hard. On the ground, the 1st Brigade, as part of the Eighth Army's Task Force Kean, was making a limited objective counterattack towards Chinju, designed to blunt an enemy attack driving on Pusan from the west.

Following the jump-off on 7 August the Task Force was held up by bitter enemy resistance at a road junction three miles west of Chindong-ni.

During the three days of this engagement, Marine planes flew well over 100 sorties, most of them in close support. VMF's-214 and 323 quickly worked out a flight schedule which would keep planes constantly available to the brigade during the daylight hours. Relieving each other on station, flights from one or both squadrons were on tap above the front lines to strike strong points within a matter of minutes.

The pattern of attack followed the established doctrine of the Marine air-ground team. Air and artillery preparation softened up enemy positions in the objective area, and the closely following infantry assault finished the job. As far as Marine air was concerned, however, air preparation was only half its task. Corsairs hovered overhead ready to blunt enemy counterattacks, to strike a particularly stubborn strong point, or to cut down retreating North Korean troops before they reached new defensive positions.

By the evening of 9 August the core of enemy resistance was broken and the brigade advanced rapidly. Enemy opposition proved light on 10 August, and the brigade moved through Paedun-ni and almost to Kosong.

On 11 August, Marine air had its day, a day which gratified Marine pilots and won the admiration of their fellows on the ground.

As the fast moving Marines came within sight of Kosong, an artillery concentration fired into the town by brigade artillery flushed major elements of the North Korean 83d Motorized Regt. Severely pressed by 3/5 and its supporting fires, the enemy attempted a hasty withdrawal along the Kosong-Sachon road under a bright afternoon sun. They discovered their mistake quickly—but too late. They fell prey to a division of VMF-323 Corsairs led by Maj Arnold A. Lund. This flight, after reporting to the forward FACP, had been sent on a search and attack mission beyond the town. Just west of Kosong they spotted the road-bound enemy column composed of approximately 200 vehicles, including trucks, jeeps, and motorcycles carrying troops, equipment, and supplies.

SWOOPING DOWN, the Corsairs made their first attacks as low-level strafing runs along the length of the column in order to halt and disorganize it. This tactic worked admirably. The column telescoped to a grinding stop, and vehicles took off in every direction. They crashed into each other, bounced into ditches, and tried for cover on the hillsides while the troops scattered for concealment. The Marine pilots then turned their attention to individual targets with rocket and 20mm attacks. By this time the enemy had begun to fight back. The Corsairs encountered intense automatic and small arms fire, but they persisted in their attacks and had the satisfaction of seeing approximately 40 vehicles burning before



MajGen Thomas J. Cushman

they were relieved in the attack by another flight of VMF-323 Corsairs and Air Force F-51s.

The original attacking flight did not escape unscathed. Two of the four planes, piloted by Capt Vivian Moses and 2dLt Doyle Cole, were badly damaged by the enemy fire and forced to make emergency landings. Capt Moses, the first Marine aviator killed in Korea, died in an attempt to land his crippled plane in enemy territory. Lt Cole was more fortunate and reached a small bay just behind the enemy lines where he made a water landing. Within five minutes he was recovered by a helicopter. Lt Cole is reported to have greeted the elderly "sergeant" who helped him into the helicopter with a slap on the back and "Thanks a lot, Mac, I sure am glad to see you." It was only after landing that he discovered the "sergeant" to be Gen Craig.

When the Marines of 3/5 reached the place of the enemy's debacle, they found many serviceable vehicles among the wrecked transport and dead that littered the area. These they put to good use, as they had been suffering from a shortage of organic transport.

At 0630 on 12 August, 13 Corsairs roared off the flight decks of the escort carriers to furnish close air support for 1/5, which at that time was passing through 3/5 in continuation of the advance. But since no resistance developed the planes were sent ahead of 1/5 to attack targets of opportunity. During the morning and early afternoon, pilots discovered concentrations of troops and vehicles at Sachon, Tundok, and Chinju and struck heavy blows with bombs, napalm, rockets, and 20mm fire.

By 1400 the brigade spearhead had advanced 16 foot-slogging miles to the vicinity of Changchon, only three and a half miles southeast of Sachon, the battalion objective. At this point the road curves to left, and front; Changchon itself lying between the hill on the left (202) and the high ground to the front.

Planes of both squadrons were overhead when, at approximately 1300, the battalion point unmasked enemy intentions to permit the whole column of 1/5 to move into the defile, then open with interlocking fire from positions A, B, and C (Map 2). As the 15 men of the Recon Co detachment entered Changchon, they observed two of the enemy taking cover and opened fire. In turn, the point was immediately taken under fire by trigger-happy North Koreans in position B.

When the enemy opened fire, the 1st Plat, B Co had just entered the defile, and the rest of the company was about to follow. All remaining enemy positions now joined the fire fight. The 1st Plat was ordered forward to aid the point and the 2d Plat moved up to the rear of the 1st. At this time enemy personnel were observed moving on the hill of position B, and a strafing attack was requested in the general area. Almost at once two VMF-214 Corsairs left the orbiting circle of planes and under the direction of the forward air controller strafed the area with 20mm fire. (Shown as strike I on Map 2.) As the air strike lifted, the 3d Plat moved across the rice paddies and attacked up the slope of the hill.

WHILE THIS WAS GOING ON, two other Corsairs whose time on station was drawing to a close were directed to search beyond the village and attack any profitable target discovered. Immediately these planes spotted enemy transport and personnel approximately a half mile west of Changchon. They attacked at once, dispersing the troops and destroying an undetermined number of vehicles. (Shown as strike II.) Traffic on the Sachon-Changchon road was heavy, and soon a division of VMF-323 planes found and attacked an estimated 65 vehicles on the short stretch between the two villages.

The intense interlocking fire from cleverly concealed and well positioned machine guns prevented the 3d Plat from reaching the hill crest of position B, and the platoon was ordered to fall back while company 60mm mortars worked over the hill. But positions at B constituted the enemy's main point of resistance, and he was so well entrenched that the 60mm mortars used up almost all available ammunition without success. It became necessary to call for another air strike.

This time the Corsairs of VMF-323 attacked with all available ordnance, blanketed the area, and succeeded in destroying the positions. (Shown as strike III.)

While the planes were engaged, a battery of brigade artillery had been delivering concentrations on the high

ground of Hill 202, and Marine infantrymen had seized the high ground on both flanks. By 1700 all enemy positions had been silenced except A. This was in partial defilade and difficult to bring under supporting arms fire, with the exception of air. Therefore, five VMF-214 Corsairs were called to destroy it under direction of the forward air controller, and quickly accomplished their mission with 20mm cannons. (Shown as strike IV.)

B Co was now directed to seize and occupy the high ground on the left flank (Hill 202). But before the Marines could move out, the enemy reoccupied position B and brought them under automatic weapons fire. Again Corsairs were called on, and again the position was silenced. (Shown as strike V.)

By this time darkness was fast approaching, but there was still time for a VMF-214 flight to do one more job. Observers had spotted the enemy massing behind the crest of position B, and the 1/5 battalion commander requested a strike against this concentration. The Corsairs attacked at once, killing or dispersing these troops, then raced the darkness to their carrier roost. (Shown as strike VI.) The best indication of the effectiveness of this last attack was that the Marines were not troubled from this direction for the remainder of the engagement.

During the night, the brigade received orders to withdraw to Chindong-ni, and 1/5 was directed to pull out at 0630 on the morning of 13 August. However, before dawn and before Marine air appeared on the scene, enemy forces launched a strong counterattack on B Co's left flank from close-in and well concealed positions. With the coming of daylight, for the first time in the Korean fighting the brigade turned supporting arms, including the newly arrived Corsairs of VMF-214, to the task of helping Marines withdraw. All wounded personnel were grouped, and the company moved down the slope escorted by the fires of supporting arms. No casualties were suffered during the withdrawal, and upon reaching the road the Marines started back whence they had come.

They had waged a determined struggle to come within striking distance of their objective, and turned their backs on Chinju with understandable regret. But the "fire" brigade was urgently needed elsewhere. By 13 August, North Korean bridgeheads over the Naktong River in the west central front posed a serious threat to Taegu and the Pusan-Taegu MSR. As part of the counter-attack force, the Marine unit was assigned the mission of clearing the enemy from strongly entrenched positions in the bulge area west of Yongsan and just east of the Naktong River.

With almost no respite, the brigade was lifted from Chindong-ni to Miryang on 14 August, moved into attack positions on 16 August, and prepared to jump off on the morning of the 17th. Objective 1 was Obong-ni Ridge, a key terrain feature of the forward screen pro-

ecting the bridgehead. (Map 3) On this barren elevation, pockmarked with rocks and crevices, the North Koreans chose to fight it out, and fight they did—with a ferocity that recalled the fanatical Japanese resistance of WW II.

Cleverly they had fortified two lines of positions: one forward of the crest, and a second dug into the reverse slope. When supporting fires lifted, the enemy was able to move into the forward positions to man defenses and replace casualties. In this situation, good napalm coverage would probably have proved decisive. Unfortunately, the stock of napalm tanks had fallen to a point where they had to be carefully rationed, since the long flight from the carriers and the time on station made it necessary that the planes utilize these to carry extra fuel for themselves.

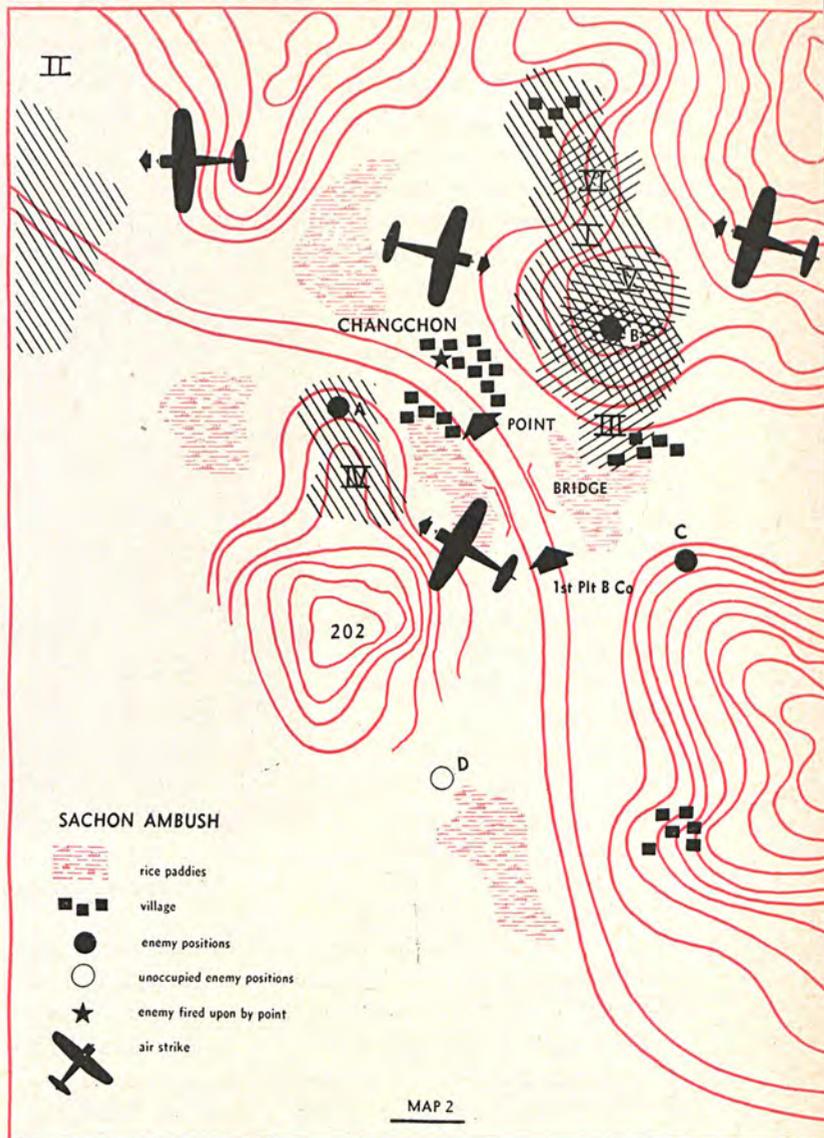
Of the 18 Corsairs participating in the original bombardment of objective 1, only four carried napalm tanks, and one was dropped out of the target area while another failed to ignite.

The 2d Bn jumped off in assault at 0800 on the morning of 17 August and soon encountered an unhappy train of circumstances. As the men started up the slope, resistance quickly proved that the preparatory fire leveled at objective 1 had been inadequate. From the heights of the ridge and both flanks came a hail of mortar and machine gun fire. Nevertheless, the Marines pressed home the attack with the forward air controller directing Corsairs on continuous strafing runs in front of the advancing troops and tank fire hitting visible enemy positions.

Despite heavy casualties a handful of Marines fought their way to the top on three separate occasions, but each time were overwhelmed. Lacking a third (reserve) company, the battalion simply had too few men for the task. Early in the afternoon the remnants of the two assault companies were forced to withdraw and dig in about midway down the slope, and 1/5 was directed to relieve 2/5 in assault.

MEANWHILE THE CORSAIRS continued to pound the enemy on the heights. Repeated attacks with bombs, rockets, and 20mm guns worked over the top of the ridge and the positions on both the forward and reverse slopes. But once again the lack of napalm proved a serious deficiency. The enemy employed extensively the deep stand-up and cut-back foxhole which was often impervious to strafing and difficult to pinpoint with rockets and general purpose bombs.

At 1600, the 1st Bn renewed the up-hill attack. Again the Marines paid dearly for every bit of ground. But aggressive platoon action and the heavy weight of air and ground supporting fire gradually turned the tide. By daylight B Co had wrested the two northern crests (Hills



102 and 109) of Obong-ni Ridge from the enemy, and A Co was just short of the high ground on the adjoining hill (117).

The defensive positions set up for the night extended from the nose to the right of Hill 102 to the saddle on left of Hill 109, along the east slope of Hill 117 and down to the low ground. The expected counterattack came during the dark early morning hours of 18 August. The enemy succeeded in temporarily isolating one platoon on the east slope of 117, penetrated positions on both sides of 109, and forced back the left flank. But the Marines refused to surrender possession of the hilltops, and with dawn the Corsairs came to help restore positions.

At 0700, following heavy air strikes on Hill 117, A Co resumed the assault to seize the crest. Initially progress was good, but the attack soon ran into trouble from a particularly stubborn enemy machine gun that covered the main avenue of approach and effectively pinned down the company's right flank on the east slope of the hill. So well emplaced was this position that it



defied destruction by supporting ground fire.

Capt John R. Stevens, A Co commander, requested an air strike. In approximately five minutes the request had passed through channels and a Corsair plummeted down on the target. The Marines held their breath as the plane's bomb struck less than a hundred yards forward of their lines. But it scored a direct hit and the attack was resumed immediately. As the Marines passed over the destroyed position, they discovered that instead of one gun the emplacement had actually sheltered a nest of four, all of which had been wiped out.

In a matter of minutes Marines were on Hill 117 in force. Hardly stopping to catch their breath, they started down the slope of 117 to assault adjoining Hill 143.

They succeeded in moving down the slope and across the saddle between the two hills, but here heavy fire from the crest of 143 first slowed and then pinned them down.

Once again a rush call was sent to the Corsairs. This time the lethal airborne ordnance and the accurate mortar concentrations proved too strong a dish for North Korean stomachs. They fell back without coming to grips with the advancing Marines. By 0830, 1/5 held four crests of Obong-ni and had two to go: 147 and 153.

Now, with the enemy off balance, both the ground and air elements of the brigade combined to keep up the unremitting pressure. Coordinated supporting fires were brought to bear on the two remaining hills, and after a short respite 1/5 jumped off in attack, advancing south along the ridge top.

It soon became apparent that the enemy's main line of resistance had been penetrated, and numerous observers reported detachments of North Korean soldiers leaving their positions. By afternoon 1/5 had seized Hills 147 and 153 against light to moderate opposition.

Meanwhile 3/5 was making excellent progress in its attack against brigade objectives 2 and 3, the ridge mass beyond Obong-ni. Air, artillery, and mortar fire support paved the way. As the afternoon wore on, the attack encountered only sporadic opposition. With the constantly advancing brigade troops hot on their heels, and a devastating combination of air and ground support-



Marine air controller "talks in" Corsair for a direct hit — Korea 1950

ing fire precluding any attempt to rally, the ability to resist deteriorated rapidly. As the M gained forward momentum, so did the North Kor but in reverse.

What the Marines had struggled and hoped for happened. The small groups scuttling to the rear together, but deadly tank, artillery, and air fire the stubborn defenders of Obong-ni Ridge into a stricken horde no longer recognizable as soldiers. drawal had become retreat, and retreat—headlong

Until the afternoon of the 18th of August p VMFs-214 and 323 had been attacking terrain f and barely discernible entrenchments, but now a dance of lucrative targets appeared—enemy tro the slopes of the hills leading down to the Nakt the narrow roads and paths, on the exposed sh the river, and in the river itself. Many had cas their equipment and arms, but their speed was ob no match for that of the Corsairs. Field pieces, v and tanks fell prey to the eager pilots. And change the results were visibly rewarding. The Koreans paid for Marine casualties 15 to 20 time One four-plane flight of VMF-323 alone account more than a company of enemy dead. This flight, 1stLt Sidney Fisher, was also credited with the c tion of two enemy tanks, one machine gun positio a vehicle.

Concurrently, Marine planes also delivered close air support for 3/5's attack on objectives 2 and 3. By night the battalion had seized both of these positions with exception of one small pocket of resistance.

Estimated enemy casualties for the day credited 1,400 the Marine carrier-based squadrons and 500 to the ground elements of the brigade.

On the morning of the 19th, the Marines found that the enemy had had enough. Resistance had evaporated, but Marine planes were still finding lucrative targets along Naktong. Throughout the day both controlled, and arch and attack strikes took a heavy toll of the disorganized remnants of the routed enemy forces. Even scattered groups which had succeeded in crossing the river during the night were given no peace. West of the river, along the roads and trails and in small villages, Corsairs harried these survivors until nothing resembling a military unit remained.

In the afternoon Marine patrols sent to the river reported large quantities of abandoned arms, ammunition, equipment, and supplies, but no enemy contact. Therefore, later in the same afternoon the brigade was released from the operational control of the 24th Div and reverted to EUSAK reserve.

IN THREE DAYS OF FIGHTING, the 1st Brigade had succeeded in blunting and then turning the threatening penetration of a numerically superior force into a disorderly rout, and in the process inflicted approximately 4,000 casualties on the enemy. The North Koreans had not shown courage, defensive ability, or materiel, yet the Marines had prevailed.

Even a general explanation of this success would have encompass training, caliber of troops, leadership, equipment, supply, and other contributing factors. But the factor—the highly skillful combination of air and ground fire support—emerges as a salient feature of the operation. And the air portion of this combination, VMF-214 and 323, played a vital role in its achievement.

In a three-day period, 17 through 19 August, the pilots of these two squadrons flew a total of 135 sorties: 129 directed by Marine tactical air control parties, and six in support of the Army's 24th Div on the brigade's right. By itself, a sortie statistic means little. The assorted airborne ordnance carried on each was not unloaded in one attack, but delivered piecemeal, depending on the vulnerability of a particular target to a particular type of armament. In addition, Marines learned quickly that the North Koreans had a great fear of the gull-winged Corsairs, whose mere presence often caused them to seek cover, thereby diminishing their volume of fire. Marine pilots, therefore, interspersed dummy runs with live attacks and often continued making the former even after

they had expended their ordnance. Thus, it was not uncommon for a single Corsair to make from 10 to 15 or more runs against enemy targets, each contributing separately but distinctly to the advance of assaulting ground troops.

The first battle of Naktong Bulge had passed into military history. On 20 August the ground elements of the brigade moved to the assembly area at Changwon. Though they had paid a high price for it, the Marines were glad to be quit of the area. Little did they suspect that they would contest the same ground again—and soon.

For the air component of the brigade, however, the days following the successful close of the fight brought no change in operations. Other UN forces were still engaged and needed the air support which the pilots of MAG-33 could deliver.

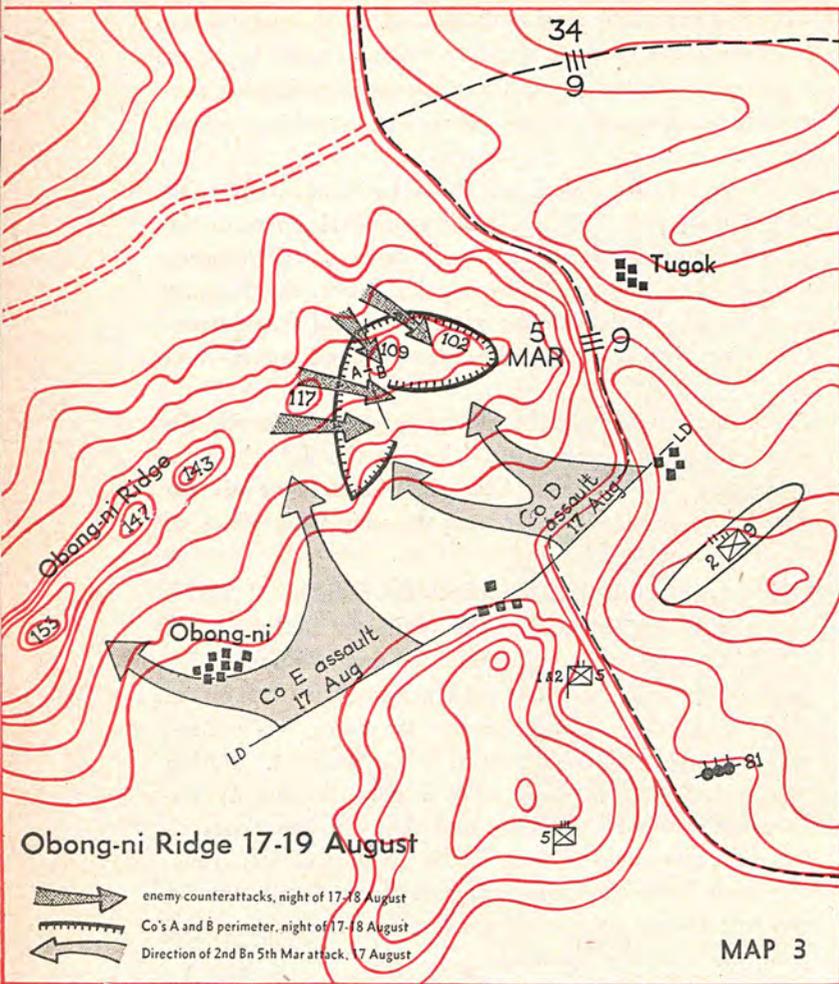
For the remainder of the month the Corsairs of VMF-214 and 323 ranged along the perimeter in support of US Army and ROK units. Maintaining the same high peak of performance they had achieved in support of the brigade, they struck wherever the going was hardest and the need for their special talent greatest. During this period Marine planes were largely directed by airborne Air Force controllers and Army ground controllers. Targets attacked were of the greatest variety, ranging from troop-sheltering mine shafts, railroad tunnels, and underwater bridges to the familiar mortar, machine gun, and artillery positions.

From 20 to 31 August VMF-214 was in action 10 days and flew 203 combat sorties. In the same period VMF-323 was in action seven days and flew 145 sorties.

The end of August found VMF-323 in Japan, enjoying its first real rest since its arrival in Korea. VMF-214, too, was scheduled for a short rest early the following month. But this squadron was destined not to have its respite for some time to come. By 1 September a persistent enemy, employing new forces, had again penetrated east of the Naktong, recaptured Obong-ni Ridge and moved all the way to Yongsan. Once more he was seriously threatening the rear of the UN perimeter. And another rush call for the "fire" brigade was sent.

News of its projected recommitment reached the brigade in the morning of 1 September, an awkward time. The ground elements of the brigade were toiling to transfer heavy equipment and supplies to Pusan for the amphibious counterstroke which was soon to be inscribed in military annals as the Inchon-Seoul operation. Also, the indispensable air component was not immediately available. The *Badoeng Straits* was laid up in Japan, the *Sicily* enroute there for replenishment and rest. And time was very short.

Despite these obstacles, the machinery for assembling



the team was set in motion. The bulk of the brigade ground elements hastily donned their combat equipment and in the early afternoon started for Miryang, a few miles east of Yongsan, where they arrived by 0630 the next day.

Meanwhile, in Japan, decisions and movements concerning the employment of VMFs-214 and 323 were equally swift. Ashiya, a convenient airbase in Japan proper was selected as a temporary home roost for the Corsairs of MAG-33, and an urgent directive went out ordering the squadrons to report immediately.

The first news of their pending commitment reached the squadrons in the afternoon of 1 September, and caught them with their planes down—literally.

After an early morning flight from the *Sicily*, all planes of VMF-214 were at Itami Air Base being checked. The ground echelon, after leaving the *Sicily* at Sasebo, was airborne in transports enroute to Itami when its destination was changed to Ashiya.

VMF-323 received the news at Kyoto, with most of its personnel on leave and its planes also at Itami. Word came by telephone at 1600 on 1 September, and by 2200 all but 12 members of the squadron had reported at Itami.

The planes of both squadrons left Itami for Ashiya next morning. They arrived about noon, and in afternoon of the same day were back hammering enemy in the threatened area of the perimeter.

With only a short pause at Miryang, the brigade went on to Yongsan, which had been recaptured by the Infantry of the Army 2d Div. At 0300 of the next day the Marines moved out at dawn to attack positions to the west. Before they arrived, however, the enemy had pushed back friendly forces, and they were compelled to fight their way to the planned line of departure.

By 0845 the assault units were in line and advancing against determined enemy resistance. For the first time in its Korean experience the brigade attacked with two battalions abreast: 1/5 to the left of the main road and 2/5 on the right. During the day both made steady headway against an enemy strongly armed with machine guns, mortars, artillery, AT guns, and tanks.

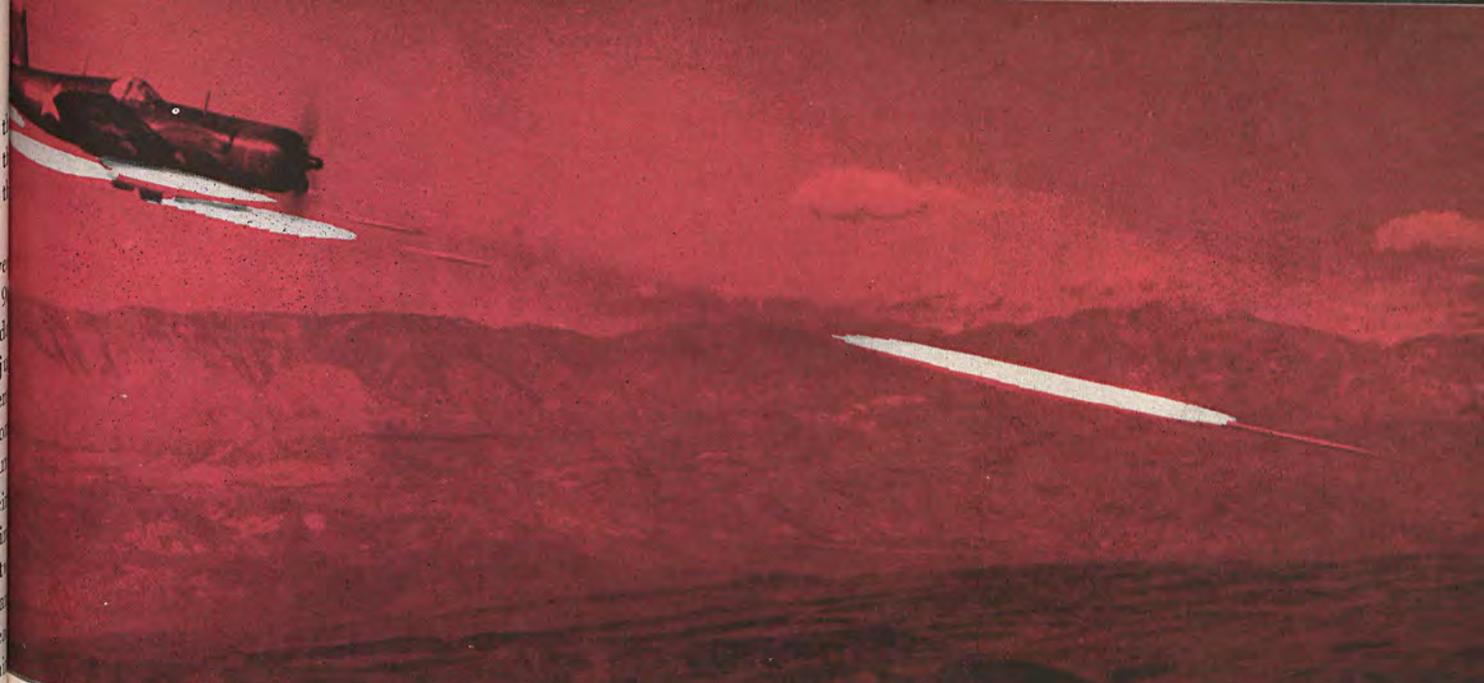
But the Marines, too, had these weapons, and in addition—air. As an example of the skillful use made of close air support by infantry units, the experience of 1/5 on 1 September is outstanding. While crossing rice paddies at 0925, B Co was halted by intense automatic weapons fire. A called air strike materialized almost immediately and destroyed the enemy positions with rockets and 20mm shells. The advance continued. A few minutes later A Co was slowed by heavy small-arms fire from the ground to the left front. This time a napalm attack was delivered on the target, and the advance picked up speed.

By shortly after noon, 1/5 had reached the ridge which was its objective 1, but with the enemy still dug in on the reverse slope. Here the battalion began to receive increasingly heavy fire from the next high ground. Once more the commander requested an air strike, and in a few minutes Corsairs were working over the area.

WITH THE MARINE PLANES pounding the high ground to their rear, enemy troops began retreating from the reverse slope of objective 1. They attempted to move along a road which skirted the high ground under attack by the Corsairs and led to objective 2. Immediately artillery took them under extremely accurate fire, and they broke into disorganized flight. Few, if any, reached the sanctuary of the next ridge line.

As 1/5 prepared to renew the attack, an air strike was run on objective 2. Thirty-two rockets struck positions on the ridge, and after an additional five minutes preparatory fire by artillery, the Marines moved out. They advanced rapidly against light and scattered resistance until late in the afternoon when directed to halt and consolidate. By nightfall both battalions were dug in approximately 3,000 yards west of Yongsan.

In the morning of 4 September, 3/5 relieved 2/5 on the right and the Marines jumped off. They soon fo



### The F4Us struck heavy blows with rockets, bombs, napalm, and 20mm fire

that, though the opposing forces had plenty of well-equipped troops, these seemed to have lost their stomach for battle. Corsairs dealt with such points of resistance as did slow the advance, with artillery fire usually following up the air attack. And the combination of the two wrought such havoc that the enemy was unable to make a stand. On four occasions during the day, North Koreans broke from defensive positions into the open, where they invariably fell prey to strafing runs and artillery concentrations. Marine pilots agreed that they had never before seen the enemy so clearly, but these were scattered over such a wide area that it was difficult to estimate accurately the casualties inflicted. However, admittedly conservative estimates placed the figure at several hundred.

Through the day the rapidly-advancing Marines passed scenes reminiscent of the carnage they had encountered west of Kosong. Added testimony to the enemy's hasty flight was the capture of two Russian-type T-34 tanks, both unmanned but in excellent operating condition. By later afternoon the brigade had moved an average of approximately 3,500 yards, and at dark it dug in 1,000 yards forward of objective 1.

The next day, 5 September, the brigade continued its advance, but for the first time in a month of combat operations there were no Corsairs overhead after 0830. During the morning, foul weather moved in over the battleground, making close air support impossible.

Fortunately, the Marines encountered light to moderate resistance that day, and ground supporting arms proved more than adequate. By evening they had advanced another 2,500 to 3,500 yards and once more faced Obong-ni Ridge, with the Naktong River less than 2,500 yards away.

At midnight, however, the brigade was relieved by elements of the 2d Inf Div. Something new and big was in the wind, and the Marines knew that a prominent role was being reserved them. They moved to Yongsan and then to Pusan where they began outloading for what was obviously a Marine-style operation—an amphibious assault.

During the two full days of flight operations, 3 and 4 September, VMFs-214 and 323 flew 70 sorties. The total number of runs made against enemy targets by these sorties was 827, and the majority of these were controlled runs in close air support of the Marine ground units.

Though flight statistics have limited significance and an accurate estimate of the damage inflicted upon the enemy by Marine pilots is difficult to compile, one thing was certain. The long laborious months of training had been fully justified. And no one knew it better than their fellow Marines on the ground. Gen Craig said: "Close air support furnished by Marine airmen was a marvel to everybody concerned, including the Marines. We had never seen anything like it even in our practice. . . ."

In effect, the end of the brigade's participation in the Pusan perimeter fighting signaled the beginning of a new operation. And aboard the CVEs, in Japan, and in Pusan, Marines set about their preparations with high confidence. The Marine air-ground team, forged in sweat and tested in the crucible of combat, had exceeded its highest expectations. Now it was ready for a more demanding test. And it came only 10 days later—Inchon-Seoul.

US & MC

*Next Month: 1st MAF in Inchon-Seoul Operation.*

# MARINE AIR OVER INCHON-SEOUL

*By Ernest H. Giusti and Kenneth W. Condit*



Reprinted from June 1952 issue of The Marine Corps Gazette

# MARINE AIR OVER INCHON-SEOUL

**X CORPS, JTF-7  
OBJECTIVE AREA**



*YELLOW SEA*

**ONLY NAVAL AND MARINE AIRCRAFT ALLOWED IN THIS AREA**

**MAP 1**

● **Kaesong**

**INCHON**

● **Yongdong-po**

**SEO**

● **Kimpo**

**Suwo**

CREDIT FOR THE REMARKABLE SUCCESS OF THE Inchon-Seoul operation rightfully went to an Army, Navy, Marine, and Air Force combination whose close cooperation insured the victory. Each service carried out its classical function with a boldness and dispatch which gave added assurance of success. But the function of the air component of the Marine team can hardly be termed classical. This component, the 1st Mar Air Wing, rendered close air support on such a wide scale and with such effectiveness that it assumed the character of an innovation.

The road to the achievement of an efficient air-ground team had been a long and hard one. Toward the end of WW II and in the years before the beginning of the Korean conflict a large share of the Marine Corps' time, energy, and physical resources had been poured into the effort. The fateful Sunday of 25 June 1950 found the team ready for combat testing.

A preliminary trial came in August when the 1st Prov Marine Brigade (reinf) helped stem the high tide of North Korean aggression in the Pusan perimeter.<sup>1</sup> But a full-dress test was still needed to prove the efficiency of the team. It came at Inchon-Seoul.

By the end of August there was no longer much danger that the enemy would break through the perimeter and drive the UN forces into the sea. Even while the South Koreans and Americans were reeling back before the initial onslaught, Gen Douglas MacArthur was planning a counterstroke. As early as 4 July he had decided to land at Inchon, seize the South Korean capital of Seoul, and cut enemy communications with the bases in North Korea.

As the summer days and weeks went by, the operation began to take shape. Joint Task Force 7, under command of VAdm Arthur D. Struble, was set up to carry out the amphibious phase of the operation. MajGen Edward M. Almond was given command of the U. S. X Corps which was to be the major troop command. Phib Group One, Task Force 90 for this operation, was designated the attack force, while the 1st Mar Div was assigned as the landing force. After the amphibious phase was completed, Gen Almond would assume command of operations ashore.

Air support planning was predicated on the basic decision to provide organic air for both JTF-7 and X Corps. Beginning on D-day, the air space over the objective area was to be the exclusive province of the air units of these two commands (Map 1). Theirs would be the responsibility for all air support for the operation. JTF-7 included a Navy fast carrier task force (TF-77) whose job was to gain air supremacy over the objective and to furnish deep support and interdiction strikes.

In cooperation with the Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, the GAZETTE herewith presents another in a series of official accounts dealing with Marine operations in Korea. Prepared by writers and researchers of the Historical Division, these articles are based on available records and reports from units in Korea. Also to be treated in this series:

1st MAW at the Chosin Reservoir  
1st MAW in the Hungnam Evacuation  
1st Engineers in Korea

Publication is scheduled for consecutive monthly issues.

Admittedly it is too soon to write a definitive history of Marine fighting in Korea. Not only are enemy sources lacking, but even Marine and Army records are still incomplete. Articles of the length to be used in the GAZETTE, moreover, do not allow space for more than an outline of operations which will ultimately be given the detailed treatment of a monograph.

But timeliness is also an end to be sought, and these preliminary narratives are based on Marine and Army reports received up to this time. These articles are presented in the hope that GAZETTE readers will feel free to add to the incomplete record. This is an invitation, therefore, for you to supplement the existing record. Send your comments and criticisms, as well as any other information you can make available, to the Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, Washington 25, D. C.

Close air support for the landing would be provided by aircraft of TG-90.5. This air support group of the attack force was made up of two CVEs, USS *Sicily* and *Badoeng Strait*, with VMFs-214 and -323 aboard. If necessary, the attack force commander could call upon the planes of TF-77 to reinforce his own close support units.

Air support for X Corps was to be provided by a tactical air command (TAC) organized under the control of the corps commander. Commanded by BrigGen Thomas J. Cushman, USMC, the components of this command were drawn from the 1st Mar Air Wing (MAW). The idea for this set-up came from Marines on X Corps staff. They convinced Gen Almond of the value of organic air support, and he used his authority as chief of staff of the theater to carry it out.

CG 1st MAW assigned MAG-33 to serve as TAC, X Corps. Its flying squadrons were VMFs-212, -312, and VMF(N)-542, but they were not to be assigned until the TAC, X Corps assumed control of operations in Korea. Until that time, they were assigned to MAG-12 for administration. The two carrier-based squadrons, which had come out to Korea as members of MAG-33, continued to be assigned to that group for administrative purposes.

D-day was set for 15 September, but before that date the air components of the invasion force had to be organized and transported to the theater of operations. Fortunately, the headquarters of MAG-33, MTACS-2, MGCIS-1, and VMFs-214 and -323 were already in the Far East and had gained invaluable combat experience

<sup>1</sup>See E. H. Giusti, *Marine Air Support in the Pusan Perimeter*, MARINE CORPS GAZETTE, May 1952.

By Ernest H. Giusti and Kenneth W. Condit

from missions in support of the 1st Mar Brigade in South Korea. The two fighter squadrons had been operating during this period from the CVEs USS *Sicily* and *Badoeng Strait*, so it was a simple matter to designate them TG-90.5.

TAC, X Corps was not activated until 8 September. The three fighter squadrons for the TAC, VMF's-212, -312 and VMF(N)-542, were still enroute from the U.S. and would not arrive in Japan until about 14 September. But all these squadrons were at a high pitch of efficiency as a result of continuous training programs, and their personnel shortages had been made up by calling members of the organized reserve to active duty. Headquarters of the 1st MAW and MAG-12 were located in Japan. They did not control operations but confined their activities to administrative support of their subordinate squadrons.

During the first two weeks in September, planes of JTF-7 flew missions designed to isolate the target area. On the 4th and 5th, TF-77 launched strikes from the fast carriers against rail and highway installations in northeast Korea. They were followed on the 7th, 8th, and 9th by the Marine flyers of TG-90.5 (Map 1). Rail lines, rolling stock, and bridges between Pyongyang and Seoul were hit, planes from VMF-323 knocking out the main highway bridge leading south from Pyongyang. A total of 122 sorties were flown by the two squadrons on these days.

SEPTEMBER 10 FOUND the Marine pilots of TG-90.5 turning their attention to the island of Wolmi-do (Map 2). Lying just off shore from Inchon and connected to the mainland by a causeway, this island was recognized as the key to Inchon. It would have to be taken before any landing could be made on the mainland, so a major effort was made to soften it up before the landing.

The first of three napalm strikes, six planes of VMF-323 and eight of VMF-214, roared off the carrier decks at 0600. Approaching the target from the north, the pilots made all their drops on the eastern side of the island. Smoke was so dense that the 14 planes of the second strike had to orbit for several minutes before they could dive down to repeat the pattern of the first strike. This time the enemy reacted with intense but inaccurate small caliber antiaircraft fire from the Inchon shore. At 1050, the third strike of the day, six planes from VMF-323 and eight from VMF-214, took off to make a final effort to burn out the enemy on Wolmi-do. As the pilots pulled away, the target area was burning fiercely, but it was impossible to make an accurate assessment of the damage.

On the 11th, the escort carriers returned to Japan for replenishment. The softening of the target was continued by destroyers and cruisers, accompanied by the fast carriers of TF-77. They worked over Wolmi-do and

Inchon thoroughly on the 13th and 14th.

The Marine squadrons were back off Inchon on the 14th, flying combat air patrol over the target, while Navy planes from the fast carriers bombed and strafed enemy positions. VMF-214 launched four combat air patrols of four planes each, while VMF-323 launched two such flights. After each flight was relieved on station, the planes expended their armament in strafing runs on Inchon. In addition to the CAPs, VMF-323 flew a two-plane naval gunfire spotting mission, working with British and American cruisers and destroyers.

D-day morning was overcast, with cloudy skies and the threat of rain squalls. At 0500 the first strike, eight planes of VMF-323, took off to support the landing of the 3d Bn, 5th Marines on Wolmi-do. According to the tactical plan, Wolmi-do was to be secured first and artillery emplaced to fire on enemy positions on the mainland. The extreme tidal range of 31 feet required the use of a daring scheme of maneuver. In the morning high tide, 3/5 would land on Wolmi-do. Then the main landing of the 1st Mar Div would be made on the evening tide, giving the troops barely enough time to reach their objectives and dig in for the night.

The eight-plane flight from VMF-323 bombed the main north-south ridge of Wolmi-do, putting seven out of eight 500-lb. bombs right on target. Following the bombing attack, the flight made a 10-minute sweep of the Inchon shore to see if there was any enemy effort to reinforce the island by moving troops across the causeway. The only sign of life was an armored car which was caught crossing the causeway and destroyed on the first pass by two Corsairs. At Love-2 the flight began strafing ahead of the first wave of landing craft, moving gradually inland. When the troops hit the beach, the planes were strafing only 50 yards ahead of them.

The Marines of 3/5 were ashore at 0630, moving rapidly inland against sporadic resistance from small disorganized groups of enemy. So rapid was the initial advance that there was no need to call for close air support, although eight planes were continuously on station. These flights relieved each other at approximately two-hour intervals, and when there were no close support mission requests, they were assigned deep support targets in the Inchon area.

AT 0950 THE REGULAR on-station flight of VMF-323 was given the first close support mission of the Inchon operation. The forward air controller (FAC) of 3/5 pointed out to the flight leader an enemy position near the lighthouse on Sowolmi-do, a dot of land connected to Wolmi-do by a causeway. Here a platoon of enemy was holding up the advance of a squad from A Co reinforced by a section of tanks. On the first pass, the planes dropped four 500-lb. bombs, but as fire was still being received, they made another run, this time with

napalm. The ground troops moved in without opposition. Wolmi-do was secured at 1115. Now began the critical period when the tide receded, leaving the Marines isolated ashore. The enemy would have an opportunity to react to the landing and rush reinforcements into Inchon from the Seoul area. So interdiction became the main air task. Navy planes of TF-77 flew many of these missions, but they were assisted by Marines from the escort carriers. Both VMF-214 and VMF-323 flights ranged over the area between Inchon and Seoul, looking for signs of enemy movement. A few isolated vehicles, weapons, and supply dumps were attacked but no major troop movements were detected.

Other missions were flown to continue the softening up of Inchon preparatory to the landing. A VMF-214 flight attacked an enemy gun position and observation post on Observatory Hill, an eminence in the heart of the city dominating the landing beaches to be used by the 5th Marines. Five 500-lb. bombs were dropped and the whole area was worked over with rockets. The pilots then dropped their napalm on the breakwater and strafed the water front with 20mm projectiles.

The final flight of the day, eight planes of VMF-323, reported in to the control agency at 1700 and was assigned missions in support of the landing. According to the landing force scheme of maneuver, the 5th Marines would land on Red Beach, opposite the city, and the 1st Marines were to come ashore on Blue Beach to the south. Upon reporting on station, the VMF-323 flight was divided into four-plane divisions and assigned missions at the two landing beaches.

The leading division was assigned an enemy mortar position in the Blue Beach area by the control center. A direct hit and a near miss were scored on this position, then the planes attacked a hill in the same area from which fire had been observed. Two napalm tanks and rocket fire knocked it out.

The second division attacked targets near Red Beach. They strafed, rocketed, and bombed two sets of enemy positions with undetermined results under intermittent anti-aircraft and automatic weapons fire. By 1815, when the planes returned to the carriers, the pilots had watched four waves land on Blue Beach, and progress on Red Beach appeared to be equally rapid. So disorganized was the enemy that the Marines were able to advance very rapidly, securing their positions against a minimum of resistance.

D-plus-1 found the pilots of both Marine squadrons flying interdiction missions, attacking targets of opportunity as far as Seoul and Suwon. Altogether, they flew 72 sorties. The juiciest prize of the day fell to VMF-214 when the 0545 flight located six enemy T-34 tanks approaching the outskirts of Inchon. The eight Marine planes attacked, dropping six 500-lb. bombs and two napalm tanks. One enemy tank was destroyed by a

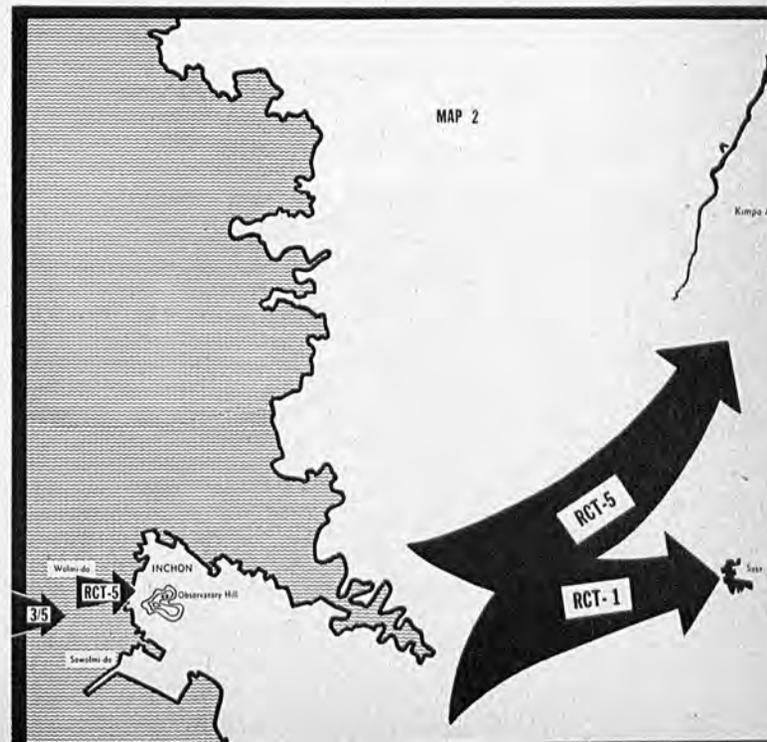
direct napalm hit, another had its tread blown off, and a third developed a fuel leak. After the first flight had expended all its armament, a second eight-plane flight took up the attack. The relieving pilots found two of the tanks parked together. These they hit with napalm, burning both. Of the four remaining tanks, all were damaged. Destruction of the tanks was not without its price, however. Capt William F. Simpson was killed when his plane crashed and exploded after taking hits on a strafing run.

By the morning of D-plus-2 (17 September), the ground troops of the 1st Mar Div had consolidated the beachhead. They were now ready to launch a two-pronged drive against their main objectives, Seoul and Kimpo Airfield. The 5th Marines were to advance northeast, take Kimpo, cross the Han, and attack Seoul from the northwest. The 1st Marines were to advance directly toward the city along the main highway and rail line. Both attacks jumped off on schedule and progressed at first against very little opposition.

In the air, planes of both squadrons were active at an early hour. A VMF-323 flight of four planes napalmed and rocketed an area target on a ridge in front of the 5th Marines. VMF-214 planes on an interdiction mission caught a group of about 400 enemy soldiers on the Suwon-Seoul road. Under strafing attack, the Koreans scattered and took cover in the ditches.

Up to this time, lack of close support targets had forced Marine pilots to fly missions of the interdiction or deep support type, in spite of the fact that they had been assigned specifically to provide close support for ground troops. But on the 17th there was a change. As the 1st Marines advanced along the main highway towards Seoul, it encountered bitterly resisting enemy rear guards who offered excellent targets for close support strikes.

Credit for the first close air support strike of the day



fell to the pilots of VMF-214. At about 1500, an interdiction flight of five planes was contacted by a FAC and given a mission in support of the advance guard of the 1st Marines which was pinned down by enemy fire. Three 500-lb. bombs and one napalm tank were dropped, neutralizing the target to the satisfaction of the FAC. A short time later, a VMF-323 flight of eight planes flew a strike in support of 2/1 units held up by enemy fire from a ridge running through the village of Pup-yong. The target was well covered by napalm and rockets, and a 500-lb. bomb which blew up a warehouse.

Frequent calls for air support came from the 1st Marines during the next two days as it pushed ahead along the highway leading to Seoul. VMF-323's first flight on the 18th was given a mission in support of 1/1 on the western edge of the town of Sosa, where vehicles and enemy troops were attacked with 500-lb. bombs and rockets. Later in the day, a VMF-214 flight of eight planes came to the aid of 2/1, held up by enemy fire from a ridge east of Sosa. A direct napalm hit was scored on the enemy troops on the ridge, and 500-lb. bomb hits knocked out three mortar positions. The mission completed the pilots pulled away from the target, with "well done" from the FAC.

First light on the 19th saw Corsairs catapulted off the carriers to return to the attack in support of the 1st Marines. During the day, the two squadrons flew a total of 24 close support sorties for this regiment. Typical of these missions was one flown by VMF-214 in support of 2/1. When the four planes of the flight reported on station, the FAC pointed out a long ridge from which enemy fire had pinned down two companies of Marines. There were also other enemy forces firing from buildings in the valley between the Marines and the main enemy ridge positions. On the initial run, the first plane put a rocket through a roof and the second dropped a 500-lb. bomb through the hole. Then the planes turned their attention to the enemy on the ridge, working them over with bombs, rockets, and napalm. Enemy fire stopped. The

Marines got up and walked across to take the ridge without firing a shot.

These strikes were the first to be controlled by the 1st Mar Div air support control agency, the air support section of MTACS-2. On the 18th they set up in a school house outside Inchon and began to control all aircraft assigned missions in support of the 1st Mar Div. The tactical air commander, X Corps and the components of his control agency, MGCIS-1 and the air defense section of MTACS-2, landed at the same time. On the 18th BrigGen Cushman made a reconnaissance of Kimpo Air field and on the next day the personnel of the control agency moved to the airfield and began to set up preparatory to assuming control of all air operations.

Kimpo had fallen to the 5th Marines on the 18th with very little opposition. On the 20th, the regiment crossed the Han under cover of an air strike by VMF-214 and pushed rapidly along the east bank toward Seoul. But the main air effort was again devoted to supporting the advance of the 1st Marines. Three close support strikes were flown against enemy ridge positions west of Yongdong-po, an industrial suburb of Seoul. One of these strikes, flown by VMF-323 in support of 2/1, demonstrated the versatility of the Marine close air support organization. Because of a communication failure, the FAC was unable to contact the flight leader so he relayed his instructions through the division control agency. After the planes had bombed and napalmed the target, they were advised by the division that "it was a 4.0 strike, right on, and a company was moving up to take the ridge."

Often the mere presence of Marine planes seemed to terrify the enemy. A clear demonstration of the fear which Corsairs inspired in the North Korean troops came early in the morning of the 21st. Four Marine planes with empty guns and bomb-racks were enroute home from a mission when they received an emergency call from 1stLt Norman Vining, FAC of 2/1. F Co was pinned down and taking heavy casualties in a fierce

burning village just west of Yongdong-po. Smoke and flames made it impossible for the Marines to locate the enemy who poured small arms, automatic weapons and mortar fire in upon them from the outskirts of the village. The North Koreans, on the other hand, had only fire into the flaming hole caused to find their targets.

Under the circumstances Lt Vining coupled improvisation with normal procedure. He improvised by call-

When that arm dropped another Corsair was on its way to join the fight for Seoul



ing for immediate help from the unarmed planes passing above the village and requested strike aircraft through normal channels. The Corsairs overhead responded at once, and Lt Vining started them making dummy runs on the surrounding enemy positions. For the next 20 minutes the Marine pilots flew their patterns just as they would have flown them on live runs, and the deception was so effective that the enemy's volume of fire fell off by an estimated 75 per cent. With the arrival of armed Corsairs the planes on station were relieved. And under the cover of bombs, rockets, and strafing, F Co was able to move out of the village.

In the 15 minutes prior to the arrival of the unarmed planes, the company suffered 37 casualties, but from the time they started their dummy runs until the end of the engagement casualties were few.

Later that day Marine air had another opportunity to render badly needed aid to a ground unit (Map 3). The task fell to four Corsairs of VMF-214. While orbiting over the control agency the pilots were assigned an urgent mission in support of E Co of 2/1. In a matter of minutes the planes were over the target area approximately one mile west of Yongdong-po and in contact with the FAC.

On the ground the situation was difficult. After clearing a small hill along the right of the battalion's zone of action, E Co had been in the process of moving to the main Inchon-Seoul road. The enemy had quickly returned to the high ground in force and taken the Marines under heavy small arms and automatic weapons fire. Men of the company were in positions in single file along a railroad embankment and although they were in no danger of being overrun, they were unable to move without taking casualties. Behind them lay a two to three hundred yard stretch of rice paddies fully exposed to fire from the nearby hill. Lateral movement was also prohibited by enemy fields of fire.

This was the situation when the FAC moved up a secondary road to a point on the company's right flank where he could observe the area and requested the air strike. As soon as the VMF-214 planes reported, the FAC oriented them on target and directed them to make their firing runs parallel to the railroad embankment. The Corsairs, closely controlled by the FAC throughout the attack, dropped their bombs on the slope to within 100 yards of the Marines. Rockets were fired within 75 yards. And strafing was carried out within 30 yards of the embankment.

So successful was the air support in reducing enemy fire that E Co was able to move to the secondary road and thence to the main highway without casualties.

This day saw the amphibious phase of the operation officially ended with the assumption of command ashore by Gen Almond. Control of air operations passed to Gen Cushman, the TAC, X Corps. Fighter aircraft of

the TAC began to arrive at Kimpo Airfield on the 19th, when six planes of VMF-212 and six of VMF(N)-542 flew in from Japan, to be followed the next day by six more planes of each squadron. The remaining planes arrived on the 22d and 23d. On the 21st, an exchange of squadrons was made between MAGs-12 and -33. VMFs-212, -312, and VMF(N)-542, formerly under MAG-12, were now assigned to MAG-33, while VMFs-214, -323, and VMF(N)-513 were transferred to MAG-12.

The next day, 22 September, was a refueling day for TG-90.5. Of the two carrier-based Marine squadrons, only VMF-323 was available to furnish air support for the ground units driving on Seoul. This squadron almost doubled its average number of daily sorties to compensate for the lack of VMF-214 aircraft. They were rein-



forced by half of the planes and crews of both VMF-212 and VMF(N)-542 which had begun operations from Kimpo on 20 September.

For both VMF-212 and -323 take-off time on the morning of 22 September was 0550. Flying from Kimpo, the eight Corsairs comprising VMF-212's first strike of the day were less than five miles from the scene of the fighting. By 0615 they had reported on station, been assigned a close support mission, and reported over target to the FAC. The target was entrenched enemy troops holding up 3/5 as it moved on Seoul from the northwest. During the next 25 minutes the North Koreans were subjected to a lethal dose of sixteen 260-lb. bombs, 45 rockets, and 1200 rounds of 20mm cannon fire. By the time the VMF-212 Corsairs had expended their ordnance, six VMF-323 planes had completed the longer flight from their carrier base and were ready to continue close support for 3/5. The battalion was now closing in on Hill 296 and the FAC directed the VMF-323 planes to attack a troublesome enemy mortar position located on the reverse slope of a flanking ridge. The flight, led by Capt James K. Johnson, struck the position with two napalm tanks and four 500-lb. bombs, effectively neutralizing it. Next the Corsairs turned their attentions to enemy troops observed in the area. Thirty

rocket and strafing runs were made and heavy casualties were inflicted upon them. Against light resistance the men of 3/5 had seized the crest of Hill 296 by 0938.

As the day wore on, the need for air support grew. Men of the 5th Marines were now hitting the enemy's main defensive line which followed the ridges protecting the northwest approaches of Seoul. North Korean attacks to regain the important ground increased steadily. By dark 3/5 had successfully utilized 11 controlled air strikes to help frustrate enemy intentions.

Also on 22 September, three air strikes were flown in close support of 1/5 which encountered determined resistance in seizing Hill 105 on the regiment's right flank. And two controlled strikes were flown in support of the Army 32d Inf Regt southwest of Seoul.

From 23 through 25 September, the tempo of air support operations was stepped up as the friendly troops gradually slugged their way forward against steadily growing opposition.

During these three days the *Badoeng Strait* was out of action for replenishment, taking with her VMF-323. But as the *Badoeng Strait* departed, the *Sicily* arrived so that VMF-214 was available to provide air support commencing early in the morning of the 23 September. The 23d was also the arrival date of VMF(N)-542. The 1st MAW now had three full-strength squadrons committed to combat operations.

This achievement was nicely timed. The next three days, 23, 24, and 25 September, saw the 1st and 5th Marines cracking through the hard crust of Seoul's outer defenses and into the suburbs of the city itself. And Marine air was put to good use.

From 23 through 25 September the three squadrons flew a total of 275 combat sorties, the majority in close support of friendly troops assaulting Seoul. Of the six

strike flights flown by VMF-214 on the 23d, the last airborne at 1600, rendered particularly outstanding service. This five-plane division, led by LtCol Walter E. Lischeid, CO of VMF-214, reported in to the control agency and was immediately assigned to close support of 1/5. The battalion, after capturing Hill 105 on the previous day, had had all it could do to keep possession. On Hill 105, men of 1/5 anchored one end of the Marines' line, and 3/5 the other end on Hill 296, but the ridge line between the two hills was strongly held by the enemy. Both hills were important terrain features overlooking the city, and the North Koreans kept up a remitting pressure on the two battalions of the 5th Marines.

Small unit counterattacks, automatic weapons, mortar and high velocity fire were unleashed against the Marines who continued to hold to the ridge tops. The earlier flight had helped relieve pressure against 3d Bn and now the last flight of the day, VMF-323, was detailed to do the same for the beleaguered 1st Bn.

The flight approached 1/5's zone of action at 7,500 feet and established contact with the FAC. The controller pinpointed the target, an enemy concentration of troops and automatic weapons on a ridge only 150 yards from Hill 105. And two Corsairs made the first attack with napalm, rockets, and 20mm shells. Two accurate napalm drops scored hits on the ridge and the volume of enemy fire fell off appreciably. The other three planes now joined the attack and all five Corsairs placed the top and slopes of the high ground with a combination of rocket, 20mm, and dummy runs. So effective were these attacks that the flight was called off and assigned a second target, two anti-aircraft guns located just beyond the silenced ridge. This time the attack was initiated by the trio of bomb-carrying planes.

At newly-won Kimpo, mechs kept the Corsairs flying

Hits or damaging near misses were chalked up for all three, and the positions were reported neutralized. All five planes then turned working over the area with both live and dummy runs. By the time the Corsairs broke off the attack and turned homeward, they had spent one hour and fifteen minutes over the target area. Before them still lay a 45-minute flight back to the *Sicily* and touchy carrier landings aboard a baby flattop but they carried with them the comforting knowledge that they had helped fellow Marines in a bad situation.





Seoul was a flak trap

The next day, 24 September, saw VMF-212 setting a 1st MAW record for combat sorties flown in Korea by one squadron in a single day. Operating only in daylight hours, 12 flights flew 46 sorties against a wide variety of targets as VMF-212 Corsairs ranged all over the X Corps' objective area. And a run down of the missions carried out by squadron planes on the 24th reflects the flexibility of Marine aviation and the versatility of its pilots.

Flight Number	Type of Mission	Target
1	Close support	Gun emplacements
2	Search and attack	Enemy troops
3	Combat air patrol	Over enemy-held Suwon Airfield
4	Search and attack	Railroad cars and trucks
5	Search and attack	Trucks
6	Close support	Troops and barracks area
7	Close support	Troop positions
8	Close support	Troops and gun positions
9	Miscellaneous	Surrender-leaflet drop
10	Close support	Troops and gun positions
11	Search and attack	Targets of opportunity
12	Close support	Troops and gun positions

Also on 24 September the fifth flight of VMF-323 Corsairs spotted and attacked four T-34 tanks in 2/5's zone of action. TSgt Truman G. Bunce destroyed one by a direct hit with a 500-pounder, while the rest of the division claimed a second, probably destroyed by napalm, and a third damaged by rockets and strafing. The squad-

rons seemed to have a proclivity for enemy tanks, for the next flight found two more in the same general area. One tank was chalked up to Capt William J. Longfellow, whose dead-on napalm drop engulfed the machine in flames; the remaining T-34 was destroyed by a combination of rockets, bombs, and 20mm strafing. Of the 10 planes participating in the two attacks, five were damaged by the intense and accurate antiaircraft fire which abounded in the air over Seoul.

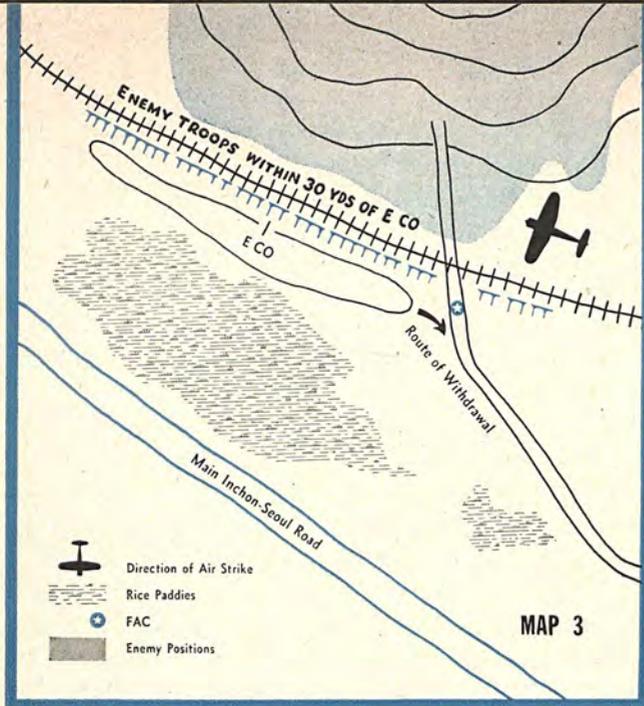
On this day, too, the 1st Marines crossed the Han and advanced into the western part of the city. While in the northwest sector, 2/5 cracked the enemy's main line of resistance by seizing the high ground lying between Hills 105 and 296 despite heavy casualties. Along the ridge line, which had been subjected to repeated air strikes and artillery fire for two days, the battalion counted more than 1,200 enemy dead, an eloquent but mute testimony to the effectiveness of the Marine air-ground team.

On the morning of 25 September, take-off time for the first Tigercat of VMF(N)-542 was 0230. This single-plane reconnaissance flight initiated a long and full day of operations. The first two flights were single-plane night reconnaissance and attack missions. These flights, by spotting and attacking enemy artillery and mortar muzzle flashes, discouraged his use of night harassing fires. With the coming of daylight, the squadron turned to interdiction and close support strikes. Seven interdiction sorties ranged behind enemy lines, shooting up tunnels, rolling stock, and trucks. There were also eight close support sorties flown against the enemy holding up the advance of ground Marines in Seoul. The final three flights of the day were solo heckler hops over the X Corps area. Thus ended a typical day of VMF(N)-542 operations—literally a day without end, for before the last Tigercat had landed, another was aloft to initiate another day of around-the-clock operations.

During the night of 25-26 September, the *Sicily* left TG-90.5 for maintenance work, and was out of action for the remainder of the operation. But as the *Sicily* steamed away, it was replaced by the *Badoeng Strait* with VMF-323 aboard.

The next two days, 26 and 27 September, saw Marine air pouring it on the enemy whenever and wherever he could be found as the struggle for Seoul reached its climax. In this period the 1st Marines slugged its way through the center of the capital, and the 5th Marines moved into the northwest sector. The 7th Marines, attacking in a generally easterly direction just north of the city, threatened the main escape corridor, while the 32d Infantry crossed the Han and occupied the southern outskirts.

Dawn on the morning of the 26th found VMF-323 and the two squadrons at Kimpo with planes aloft to



initiate the 48-hour period which was to break the core of enemy resistance. Perhaps the most profitable strike of the day was flown by five VMF-323 Corsairs. This flight, led by Capt Warren P. Nichols, was launched from the *Badoeng Strait* at 1359 and reported on station above Seoul at 1430.

Its first assignment, a search for enemy troops on the northern edge of the city, was fruitless—clouds of smoke, which billowed up to 6,500 feet, seriously hampered visibility. But at 1530 the Marine pilots' luck changed. A tank-infantry patrol of the 32d Infantry, probing the eastern outskirts of the capital, bumped into a strong enemy concentration at the Seoul Junior College, and called for close support. The mission was assigned to the VMF-323 flight, and in only a few minutes the Corsairs were snarling over the scene of the fight.

The first target assigned was an artillery piece which had been subjecting the patrol to accurate fire. Quickly and efficiently the FAC talked the flight leader onto the target and when the pilot spotted the gun he fired two smoke rockets to pinpoint its location. Using the rocket smoke as a reference point, all five planes attacked the piece. Each Corsair made two runs, firing two rockets on one run and strafing on the other. The gun was silenced.

Friendly troops had meantime been drawing withering fire from several hundred enemy soldiers dispersed through the wooden buildings of the school. The FAC gave these structures as the next target. This time the attack was made with 500-lb. bombs and napalm. The three bomb-carrying planes dropped their loads first and all three 500-pounders struck in the cluster of buildings, splintering several and damaging others. Equally accurate were the closely following napalm drops made by Corsairs. In a moment the school became a pyre of

broken timbers and searing flames.

Panic-stricken enemy survivors deserted the shambles in headlong flight. Among them was a group which attempted to escape in a truck and more than a dozen sedan automobiles of a uniformly dark green color. The Marine pilots, reasonably sure that group included enemy "brass," attacked with a vengeance. Flying a circular pattern, the Corsairs hosed the column with a steady stream of rockets and 20mm shells. Seven of the sedans were burned and others damaged. The truck jam-packed with troops, was also destroyed. In executing their attack the planes had moved about three miles north of the friendly unit, but they still had contact with the FAC. The flight was now called back to attack an armored car, which had been spotted by the patrol as it attempted to flee east from Seoul. In three or four minutes the Marine pilots were back. They attacked the car and two accompanying jeeps with five rockets and about 600 rounds of 20mm shells. Hits and near misses were scored against all three vehicles, and though they did not burn they were immobilized. Time was running out and ordnance low when the FAC assigned the Corsairs still another target, a small factory sheltering North Korean soldiers. And five rocket hits soon set it afire. By this time the moment when the planes would have to turn homeward was fast approaching, but the Marine pilots were determined to make every bit of ordnance count. A last sweep was made along the highway leading east from the capital. Isolated and assorted types of transport were discovered, and at 1635 the Corsairs pointed for their carrier roost with empty guns and bare racks. All five planes were safely aboard by 1711. Later, the area of the Junior College was occupied and ground reports estimated 300-500 enemy casualties inflicted by this flight alone.

On the next day fighting inside the city reached its highest pitch, and 19 strikes were flown in close support of ground units in and around Seoul. The roughest ground fighting was reserved for 2/1, which had the mission of clearing the main street of the capital against a wily and determined enemy. The North Koreans had constructed a series of four-sided barricades composed of sandbags, eight feet high and five feet wide, located at the intersections of the main avenue with other wide streets. These strongpoints inevitably contained anti-tank guns and heavy automatic weapons.

For D Co, which spearheaded 2/1's drive on the 27th, barricade busting became the rule of the day. A Marine air played a vital if unique role in the reduction of these obstacles. The procedure was essentially simple but the results were devastating to the enemy. When the company bumped into a barricade the FAC directed the flight on station to attack it, and the planes snarled down through the heavy smoke of the burning city. Despite the thick smoke, location of the target was

not difficult. Pilots spotted the wide and straight thoroughfare cutting through the heart of the city almost at once, and friendly tanks pounding away at the contested barricade virtually pinpointed the strong-point. Marine pilots had learned through bitter experience that Seoul was a flak trap, but it did not deter them from making their runs, often at roof-top height. The enemy was subjected to accurate doses of napalm, bombs, rockets, and 20mm shells. When the planes broke off their attack, tanks and infantry moved in for the kill, and other Corsairs started working over the next barricade. The pattern was repeated again and again through the day, and by nightfall 2/1 had fought its way through the city. In the morning the 1st Marines, and the 5th which had advanced through the northwest sector, met only slight resistance. Later in the day Seoul was declared secure and the scene of battle moved north and east of the capital.

The 28th of September also saw the arrival at Kimpo of another Marine squadron, VMF-312.

Seoul was secure but ground units still had need for close support beyond the city, and lucrative targets were plentiful along roads of the enemy's retreat. VMF-312 lost no time in going into action. On the first day of full operations, the squadron flew 35 sorties, 16 in close support of Marine ground units northeast of Seoul, and nine on search and attack missions.

Close support continued to be in high demand. The 7th Marines resorted to Marine air frequently as it pushed north along the Seoul-Uijongbu road to block the main artery leading to Pyongyang, the enemy capital. The strongest opposition developed on 2 October when an estimated 5,500 North Koreans attempted to bar the path at Nuwon-ni. Fighting was close and savage, but with the aid of 14 close support strikes, the Marines broke through the enemy rear-guard and occupied Uijongbu in the afternoon of 3 October. This was the last fight of any size for Marines in the Inchon-Seoul operation. As the need for close support diminished, the emphasis of air operations swung toward deep support, although a number of strikes were flown in close support of Army infantry units.

The end of the Inchon-Seoul operation was signaled on 7 October, but Marine air operations cover the period from 7 September to 9 October. During these 33 days pilots of five Marine squadrons flew approximately 2,774 combat sorties, the majority in close support of infantry units. Flying from the *Sicily*, VMF-214 was in action against the enemy 16 of these days, and flew 484 combat sorties. VMF-323 aboard the *Badoeng Strait* was in action 22 days and contributed 784. Operating off Kimpo Airfield from 20 September to 9 October, VMF-212 and VMF(N)-542 flew 607 and 573 combat sorties respectively, while VMF-312 flew 288 from 29 September to 9 October.<sup>2</sup>

During the Inchon-Seoul operation the five squadrons were in action an average of 18 days, and the average number of combat sorties per squadron per day was approximately 32.

In terms of plane losses and casualties the cost of the 2,774 combat sorties was remarkably low. Eleven planes were shot down by enemy ground fire, and casualties, though always painful, were only six pilots and one aircrewman killed in action and two pilots wounded.

Inchon-Seoul was over. The painstaking days, months, and years spent in perfecting close air support had been justified, and the basic doctrines and procedures validated. But with the end of the Korean war seemingly in sight, Marine air had still not realized its full potential. True, an important preliminary trial had been passed in the Pusan perimeter. True, a big test had been equally successful at Inchon-Seoul. Yet, two vital questions lacked answers. One of these, how effective will close air support be when the enemy controls or contests the air space over the front lines, still remains unresolved. But the other, what is the potential of close support when climatic, terrain, and tactical conditions strain men and machines to the limit, found its answer only two months later—in the "breakout from the Reservoir."  
USMC

<sup>2</sup>Two VMF-312 planes began operating from Kimpo on 20 September. By 29 September they had flown 38 combat sorties.

*Next Month: 1st MAW at the Chosin Reservoir*

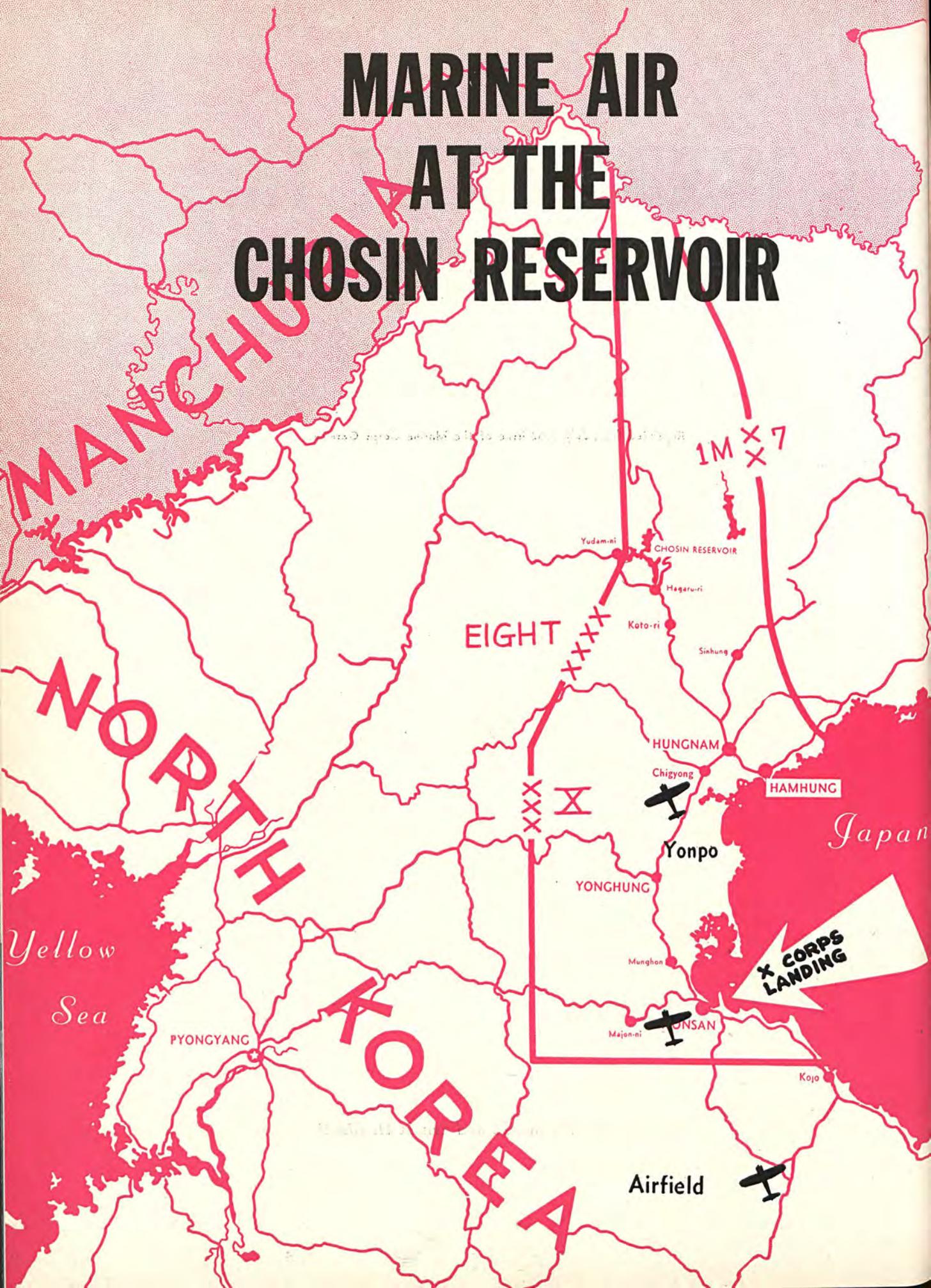
# MARINE AIR AT THE CHOSIN RESERVOIR

Reprinted from July 1952 issue of The Marine Corps Gazette



*By Kenneth W. Condit and Ernest H. Giusti*

# MARINE AIR AT THE CHOSIN RESERVOIR



MANCHURIA

NORTH KOREA

Yellow Sea

Japan

CHOSIN RESERVOIR

Yudam-ni

Hageruri

Koto-ri

Sinhung

HUNGNAM

Chigyong

Yonpo

HAMHUNG

YONGHUNG

Munghon

Unsan

Majon-ni

Kojo

Airfield

EIGHT

IM X 7

X CORPS LANDING

WINTER COMES EARLY IN NORTH KOREA. AS EARLY as November, icy blasts with a knife-like edge sweep over the mountains and through the valleys. Temperatures of 20 below zero are frequent and deep snows isolate the villages from the rest of the world. But 1950 was a year apart, and November saw hundreds of planes prowling over, under, and through the overcast while thousands of men moved over the land.

United Nations forces, after inflicting a resounding defeat upon the Communist North Korean army in the south, were marching toward the Manchurian border and what they hoped would be the finale of an extraordinarily bitter war. But they were doomed to disappointment, for Red China had already decided to win back the gauntlet wrested from the North Koreans. Even as UN soldiers approached the Yalu River, thousands upon thousands of Red China's best troops were stealthily crossing the stream. Moving by night and making use of woods, houses, and excellent camouflage, small units infiltrated rather than maneuvered into position to strike death against the Eighth Army and X Corps.

They struck hard, but their onslaught was far from a death blow. Much of the credit for blunting the Communist attack goes to Marine air power. This was the supreme test for Marine doctrines of close air support, for the ferocity of the enemy assault and the hazards of winter operations in mountain country required not only maximum effort but constant improvisation.

By the end of October, 1950 the North Korean military effort was on the verge of collapse. Following the Inchon landing and capture of Seoul, enemy forces had retreated north of the 38th parallel, leaving all South Korea in the hands of the UN forces. Units of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing had served during the Inchon-Seoul campaign as the tactical air command of the U. S. X Corps, functioning under the direct operational control of the corps commander.\*

Even before the Inchon-Seoul operation was concluded, the UN command was preparing further operations to complete the destruction of enemy forces and end the war. The concept for the new operations called for a pincer movement directed at the North Korean capital, Pyongyang. One arm of the pincer, composed of the Eighth Army, was to advance directly north from Seoul. The other arm, made up of X Corps, would make an amphibious assault at the east coast port of Wonsan, then advance west across the peninsula to join up with Eighth Army at Pyongyang.

The X Corps commander, MajGen Edward Almond, wished to retain the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing as tactical air for his corps. This was permitted but with one modification of the previous relationship. Under a ruling of the

In cooperation with the Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, the GAZETTE herewith presents another in a series of official accounts dealing with Marine operations in Korea. Prepared by writers and researchers of the Historical Division, these articles are based on available records and reports from units in Korea. Also to be treated in this series:

1st MAW in the Breakout from the Reservoir  
1st Engineers in Korea  
1st Tanks in Korea

Publication is scheduled for consecutive monthly issues.

Admittedly it is too soon to write a definitive history of Marine fighting in Korea. Not only are enemy sources lacking, but even Marine and Army records are still incomplete. Articles of the length to be used in the GAZETTE, moreover, do not allow space for more than an outline of operations which will ultimately be given the detailed treatment of a monograph.

But timeliness is also an end to be sought, and these preliminary narratives are based on Marine and Army reports received up to this time. These articles are presented in the hope that GAZETTE readers will feel free to add to the incomplete record. This is an invitation, therefore, for you to supplement the existing record. Send your comments and criticisms, as well as any other information you can make available, to the Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, Washington 25, D. C.

theater commander, all air operations north of the 38th parallel would be under operational control of 5th Air Force. Thus the 1st MAW, while its primary mission was with X Corps, was subject to orders of 5th AF and could be diverted to other missions.

Air planning was predicated on an operation similar to Inchon-Seoul—amphibious assault followed by capture and rapid exploitation of an airfield. In the first phase, two Marine fighter squadrons would participate. VMF-214 and 323, aboard CVEs *Sicily* and *Badoeng Strait*, were assigned the air support role in the naval attack force. As soon as the airfield at Wonsan was seized, an aircraft group, MAG-12, was to be landed. Its headquarters and service squadrons and heavy equipment were to be surface-lifted from Japan, while two of its fighter squadrons, VMF-312 and VMF(N)-513, were to come in by air. VMF(N)-542, the other fighter squadron of the group, remained at Kimpo. D-day was set for 20 October.

Before that date arrived, the rapidly changing situation required extensive modifications in the plan. On 11 October, I ROK Corps, advancing up the east coast, captured Wonsan. And eight days later Pyongyang fell to the Eighth Army. MajGen Field Harris, CG 1st MAW and TAC, X Corps, flew to Wonsan on the 13th, inspected the airfield and decided to begin operations at once. VMF-312 flew in from Kimpo the next day, and Far East Air Force Combat Cargo Command began bringing in aviation gasoline. Bombs and rockets were loaded on Corsairs of VMF(N)-513 and flown to Wonsan from Kimpo.

\*For this, see E. H. Giusti and K. W. Condit, *Marine Air at Inchon-Seoul*, MARINE CORPS GAZETTE, June 1952.



**Terrain demanded the utmost in flying skill, courage, and imagination**

The plan was to support VMF-312 by airlift for three days, pending the opening of the port of Wonsan and the arrival of the surface echelon. Then additional squadrons would be flown in to operate from the Wonsan field. Owing to a miscalculation, the harbor was not cleared of mines until 26 October. For 12 days flight operations had to be supported entirely by airlift. A further complication was the arrival of VMF(N)-513 on 17 October, making two squadrons dependent on airlift for all supply.

By substituting human muscle for machines, flight operations were maintained. Fuel was pumped by hand from 55-gallon drums, rolled along the ground a distance of one mile from the dump to the flight line. The squadron ordnance sections, seriously hampered by lack of supporting service units, unloaded transports, assembled bombs and rockets, and loaded them on the planes. For the first two weeks the ordnance section of VMF-312 had only one jeep and eight bomb trailers to move all the ammunition. To the overworked ground crews, the refuelers, trucks, and machine shop trailers of Service Squadron 12, landed on 26 October, were a welcome sight.

Operations during this period consisted of armed reconnaissance sorties throughout the X Corps zone and support missions for I ROK Corps advancing towards Hamhung. VMF-312 attacked bodies of retreating North Korean troops attempting to escape the advancing UN forces. On 19 October, a VMF-312 flight attacked 500 enemy troops near Yangdok, killing about 100. A flight from the same squadron caught a body of 800 enemy on the road at Kansong on the 24th and attacked it, causing about 200 casualties. Night operations did not begin until 29 October, because there were no runway lights. Until that date, VMF(N)-513 flew day missions in conjunction with VMF-312. At sea, VMFs-214 and 323 maintained combat air patrols over the task force while

mine sweeping operations were in progress.

An effort was made during the first two days to comply with 5th AF procedures. These required that all strikes for a given day be submitted to 5th AF headquarters by 1800, the previous day, but the distance between 5th AF headquarters in Seoul and X Corps headquarters in Wonsan created communication difficulties which made it impossible to get the clearance for strikes in time. The difficulty was resolved by a conference between MajGen Partridge, CG

5th AF, and MajGen Harris. They agreed that Gen Harris would have a free hand to conduct air operations in the X Corps zone, provided he kept 5th AF informed.

The 1st Mar Div began landing at Wonsan on 26 October. By X Corps order, the Marines began to advance north towards Hamhung, the Chosin Reservoir, and ultimately the Manchurian border. Air operations were now directed towards supporting this advance, and on 2 to 6 November came the first calls from Marines for close air support. The 7th Marines, advancing north from Hamhung towards the Chosin Reservoir, encountered the 124th CCF Div near Sudong, a village a few miles south of the precipitous rise to the Koto-ri plateau.

Troop movements spotted by Marine pilots late in October revealed the presence of a sizable enemy force. On the 30th a four-plane flight from VMF-312 attacked some 500 troops believed to be CCF hiding in houses in Hagaru, and the next day 500 more enemy were hit 10 miles west of Oro-ri by the same squadron. On 1 and 2 November Marine pilots struck at dug-in Chinese north of the advancing 7th Marines. A division from VMF(N)-513 and another from VMF-312 flew these missions.

Planes of both squadrons went to work in earnest on the third, furnishing close support for the regiment which had been heavily attacked during the night. Delivery of these strikes was complicated by the fact that the regiment was out of radio range of the tactical air direction center at Wonsan and was unable to request planes. Forward air controllers (FAC) had to work with whatever planes flew over their positions. Before a flight left the area, its leader was requested to send more planes. In spite of this difficulty there was no shortage of air support.

At one point, the FAC of the 2d Bn, 7th Marines was in particularly serious trouble. His radio had been

knocked out by a stray bullet, and he was unable to communicate with the planes. Just before dark, a two-plane flight from VMF-312, on its way north on a reconnaissance mission, was contacted by the FAC of 2/7, who had finally managed to repair his radio. He pointed out to the pilots about 200 CCF troops digging in on a 100 ft. high ridge overlooking the battalion perimeter. On the first pass, the pilots made direct hits with 20mm shells. Then they came in again firing rockets and dropping 500-lb. bombs. As the Chinese broke from the ridge, many of them were hit by fire from the ground troops who advanced and took the ridge without difficulty.

For the next three days Marine pilots flew close support missions for the 7th Marines, as that regiment slugged ahead against heavy enemy resistance. The column rounded a bend in the road approaching Chinhung-ni and ran into four T-34 tanks. The four planes on station overhead were called in and attacked in a matter of seconds, destroying the second tank in column with direct rocket hits. Bazookas and recoilless 75mm rifles took care of the rest. By evening of 6 November the CCF 124th Div had been crushed, and the Marine advance toward the Chosin Reservoir continued practically unopposed. During the battle with this enemy division, Marine air flew a total of 148 close support sorties.

As the ground troops of X Corps advanced to the north, the air component of the corps was built up by flying in additional units of the 1st MAW. VMF-212 arrived at Wonsan on 3 November. Three days later MAG-33 was ordered to move from Japan to Yonpo Airfield in the Hamhung-Hungnam area. By 10 November, when VMF-212 was transferred to Yonpo, the group ground echelon was ready to begin operations. Five days later VMF-214, ordered ashore from the *Sicily* so the ship could prepare for anti-submarine operations, set up at Wonsan.

Because of a shortage of shipping in the theater, both squadrons suffered from a lack of heavy equipment. VMF-214 was particularly hard hit. The squadron maintenance and servicing gear, not needed aboard ship, had been left in Japan. MAG-12 made up most of the de-

ficiencies, but vehicles remained critically short. The squadron had only two jeeps, one jeep trailer, and one bomb-service truck. Through the herculean efforts of the ground crews, these difficulties were overcome and aircraft availability of 81 per cent was maintained.

The augmented air strength was used for cover over the columns advancing toward the reservoir and for extensive reconnaissance. Ground troops encountered only occasional small groups of enemy, but pilots ranging north and west of the column sighted many small CCF groups, some in the open and others hiding in houses. And thousands of footprints in the snow were clear evidence of the presence of a much larger force.

By 15 November, the 7th Marines was concentrated at Hagaru at the southern tip of the Chosin Reservoir, and the 5th Marines was moving up the road behind them. Repeated reports by pilots of enemy troop activity to the north and west served to intensify the fear of Marine commanders that their units might be cut off. To strengthen the division position they moved the tactical air direction center to Hagaru, where it would be in a centralized position to control aircraft, and started construction of a C-47 airstrip there.

Under X Corps orders, the 1st Mar Div resumed the advance on 22 November towards Yudam-ni. Marine pilots flying cover over the column reported five road-blocks which were removed by engineers. And as the Marines approached Yudam-ni, they called in air to attack small CCF units attempting to delay the advance. By 27 November the 7th and 5th Marines were in Yudam-ni, and the 1st Marines were protecting the main supply route (MSR) with single battalions at Hagaru, Koto-ri, and Chinhung-ni. Thus the 1st Mar Div was relatively concentrated by comparison with other X Corps units scattered all the way to the Manchurian border.

Marine commanders had reason to be apprehensive, for the first blow of the CCF offensive fell on 25 November. Thousands of Chinese poured through the gap in north central Korea and struck the II ROK Corps on the right flank of the Eighth Army. The flank was overrun and the Eighth Army compelled to withdraw. CCF commanders now turned their attention to X Corps on the east, hurling the full weight of eight divisions, 80,000 to 100,000 men, against the 1st Mar Div in the vicinity of the Chosin Reservoir. Of all X Corps units, the 1st Mar Div was the only one in a posture of defense. The others were widely dispersed from Wonsan all the way to the Manchurian border, a distance of 150 miles. The wisdom of Chinese strategy in choosing to strike the Marines under these circumstances is an open question, but that they committed a serious error in underestimating the air fire and logistics support available to the division is proved by the fighting withdrawal from the reservoir.

Although the fears of Marine commanders had been

Prop wash blew the snow off the frozen runways





Vital supplies were air-dropped to trapped units

aroused by increased enemy activity in the Chosin Reservoir area, they were not aware of the magnitude of the enemy build-up. Wisely, the enemy chose to march by night and to hole-up by day in small villages. As many as 50 to 60 soldiers crowded into a single hut, and a whole battalion was concealed in one settlement. Supplies were carried on the backs of troops and pack animals, so that vehicular traffic was kept at a minimum. To secure his communications, CO 7th Marines dispatched Fox Co, reinforced on the afternoon of the 27th, to protect the vital 4,000-foot pass between Yudam-ni and Hagaru. And Baker and Charlie Cos were sent on reconnaissance patrols to the southwest.

For Marine air it was a day of routine operations. VMF-212 flew 20 sorties, 18 in close support of X Corps units and two on reconnaissance. VMF-312 carried out 27 sorties, eight in close support of Eighth Army elements, 16 in close support of X Corps, two on reconnaissance, and one photo escort. VMF-214 flew 30 sorties, all in support of the severely pressed Eighth Army. Aboard the *Badoeng Strait* VMF-323 was prevented from launching its Corsairs by inclement weather. The two night fighter squadrons, VMF(N)-513 and VMF(N)-542, had planes aloft during the day and night to fly a total

of 28 sorties on a wide variety of missions, including night intruder, day close support, and reconnaissance.

That night, at Wonsan, Yonpo, and aboard *Badoeng Strait*, members of the 1st Wing had no inkling that Yudam-ni fellow Marines of the 5th and 7th Marines were engaged in a struggle for survival. On the morning of the 28th the eastern sky was still dark when five flights of Corsairs roared aloft to begin a day of all-out air operations. Winging through the blackness three flights headed northwest to the reservoir area. The other two pointed almost due west, for Eighth Army units too were in urgent need of close support.

Dawn found the Corsairs over the three principal battle areas. Northeast of the reservoir VMF-323 planes supported the withdrawing I ROK Corps throughout the day. To the west, VMFs-312 and 214 concentrated their attacks in support of the Eighth Army which had difficulty going in attempting to withdraw to more defensible positions. Improved flights utilizing the Corsairs of Headquarters Squadron-12 (Hedron-12) were directed both north and west. And VMF-212 flew all its sorties in the immediate vicinity of the reservoir.

The pattern of VMF-212 operations on the 28th graphically illustrates the typical employment of Marine air in the days which followed. During the morning and early afternoon, five flights of the squadron were directed in close support attacks by the FACs of the 2d and 3d Bns, 5th Marines against enemy troops ringing the two battalions from west to northeast of Yudam-ni.

The previous night the enemy had been able to concentrate his troops under the cover of darkness and launch his assaults from close to Marine positions. But now, in the broad daylight, the Corsairs prohibited him from massing. Through the morning, targets for Marine pilots were enemy troop concentrations and automatic weapons exclusively. Under the cover of air and ground support the 2d Bn, 5th Marines withdrew from its exposed position, and the two regiments formed an oval perimeter on the high ground surrounding Yudam-ni.

Meanwhile on the road just east of the reservoir, 1/32 of the 7th Inf Div, after repulsing a strong enemy attack on the previous night, was again beset by heavy Chinese concentrations. Five flights of VMF-212 planes were utilized during the afternoon by the 1/32 FAC to break up these concentrations. Once again the Corsairs were largely responsible for the enemy's inability to mount a wide scale attack.

Perhaps the most spectacular use of air on the 28th was made by the 1st Bn, 7th Marines which left the Yudam-ni perimeter to rescue C Co, cut off and surrounded on high ground overlooking the MSR approximately half way to the pass. Shortly after departure, the battalion ran into stiff opposition from a ridge top to the left of the road. Corsairs of VMF-212 were called in to hit the enemy positions, while A Co was deployed in a

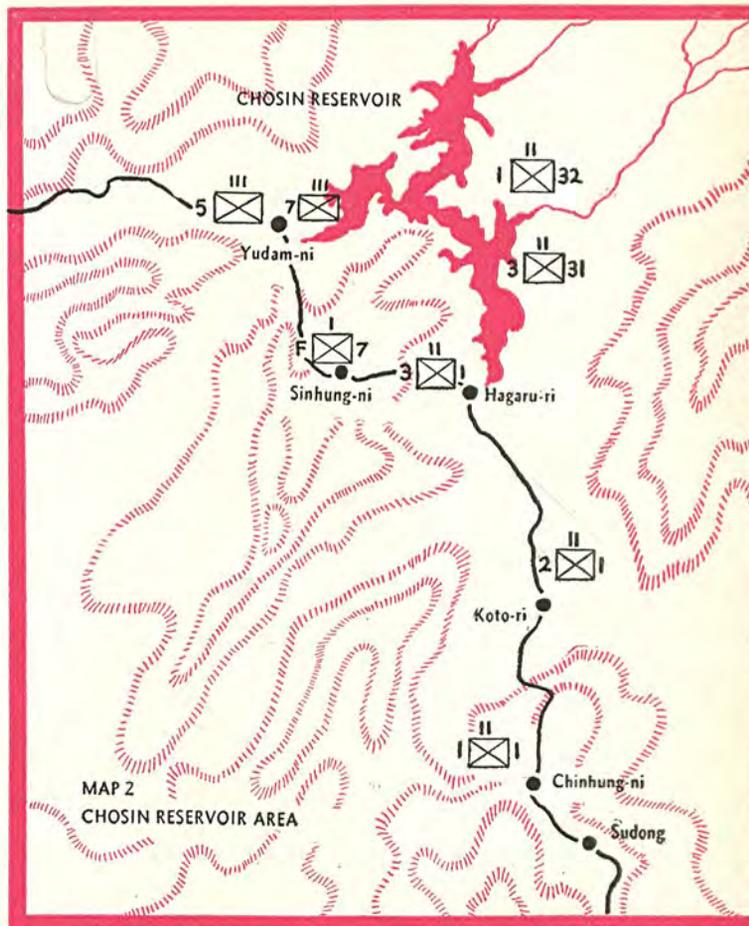
flank assault on the hill. But before the infantry could close with the entrenched enemy troops, they broke under the napalm, rocket, and fragmentation bomb runs of the Marine planes. In their desperate attempt to escape, the Chinese Reds fled down the reverse slope of the ridge and attempted to reach the MSR beyond C Co's position. A Co quickly occupied the ridge top and combined with C Co and air to wreak havoc on the fleeing enemy.

Meanwhile, as B Co approached its destination, it came under heavy automatic weapons fire from the slope of the ridge mass to the company's right and across the road from C Co. By this time the sun had set. Ammo was low. The men were fatigued. And 1/7 faced the prospect of closing C Co and fighting its way back to Yudam-ni—without air support. It was almost dark when the Marines looked up to find two Corsairs silhouetted against the evening sky. They were immediately contacted by the FAC, Capt Dan C. Holland, and oriented on the enemy concentration. Attacking in the dusk, the Marine pilots blasted the enemy with lethal doses of rockets, bombs, and 20mm shells. So daring were these firing runs, the FAC felt compelled to warn the pilots that they were perilously close to the almost obscured ridge mass. But persistence paid off, for again the Chinese Reds broke under air attack, and fled toward the valley floor. Now it was the turn of B Co to join with air and C Co in taking a heavy toll of the exposed and panic-stricken enemy. By this time even the light in the western sky was almost gone, so the Corsairs pointed for Yonpo. Flying home for a tricky landing on a dimly-lit strip, the pilots carried with them the thanks of the battalion and the FAC's report, "Ordnance right on, excellent coverage." During the engagement the team of VMF-212 and 1/7 inflicted such a resounding defeat on the enemy that the Marines returned to Yudam-ni without firing a shot.

During the day the U. S. Air Force dropped vitally needed ammunition and medical supplies at Yudam-ni, while helicopters of VMO-6 evacuated 50 seriously wounded Marines from the perimeter.

On the 28th, the 1st MAF flew 114 sorties, 62 in support of X Corps and 52 for the Eighth Army. Up to this time attacks on enemy troops had been relatively few, but on this date CCF concentrations were attacked again and again—a clear hint of things to come.

The 29th of November was to be another day of all-out air operations, but the snow which had fallen during the night and low ceilings delayed take off. At Yonpo six inches of snow covered the runways, and at sea bad weather prevented the *Badoeng Strait* from launching planes. It was 0845 before the first plane was airborne, but by 0900 all three of the land-based day fighter squadrons had flights heading for the embattled zone of the reservoir. Of the 125 day combat sorties flown by the 1st MAF on this date all but six were directed to the Chosin Reservoir area, for by now the grave danger to the 1st



Mar Div and the Army 7th Div elements was clear. The enemy had massed his strength to strike a death blow against the strongest element of X Corps.

Winging north from Wonsan and Yonpo, Marine pilots were startled by the swarms of enemy troops flooding over the countryside. Targets all day long were enemy troops and gun positions. On the previous day enemy troop concentrations had been attacked on 29 separate occasions, but on the 29th the number jumped to 61.

In the reservoir area, the pilots had their work cut out for them, for the isolated Marine and Army forces were under heavy attack. A VMF-312 division of four planes went to the aid of the 3d Bn, 1st Marines defending the Hagaru perimeter. Three hundred enemy troops overlooking Hagaru from the east were attacked with fragmentation bombs, rockets, and 20mm shells. Approximately 75 were killed and a higher number wounded. Throughout the day 3/1 employed Marine air to help keep the enemy at bay.

A section of VMF-212 Corsairs attacked enemy troops in close support of Task Force Drysdale, moving north from Koto-ri to Hagaru with reinforcements and supplies. The convoy used air extensively during the hours of light as it moved forward against steadily increasing opposition. By dusk however, vastly superior enemy forces had succeeded in separating the task force into three parts.



Briefing had to be fast, sure, yet detailed

The head of the column pushed through to Hagaru, and the rear segment made its way back to Koto-ri the next day, but the center was isolated about midway between the two towns. Close support by VMF-212 planes enabled the Marine service troops, Army troops, and a few British Marines to beat off incessant CCF attacks during daylight. But when darkness descended the Corsairs had to turn home, and the enemy made casualties or prisoners of the defenders.

Meanwhile other flights from all three land-based day fighter squadrons played an important part in the defense of the Yudam-ni perimeter. During the day CCF forces limited themselves to assaults against the northern sector guarded by the 1st and 3d Bns, 5th Marines. The devastating combination of assorted airborne ordnance and ground fire inflicted such heavy casualties on the attacking waves of Reds that the attacks were spent before they could close Marine positions.

A typical example was the afternoon assault against B Co. At noon aerial observers had reported some 2000 enemy troops cautiously attempting to group north of the perimeter. Air pounded these concentrations with such good results that when the attack was launched it had

become a piecemeal venture.

Even so, about 500 enemy were able to launch an assault against B Co at 1500. To the accompaniment of the usual cacaphony of bugles, whistles, and shouts, the Reds swept down the slope of the ridge facing the Marines. The pilots could not hear the din, but they needed little coaching from the FAC to locate the target. Peeling off at 5000 feet the Corsairs dived down to make "on the deck" runs. All four napalm tanks struck the attacking wave, scoring direct hits which tore large holes in the enemy line. As the last plane dropped its ordnance, the first was back, tailed by the others, to attack the faltering enemy with strafing runs. The assault lost momentum, and the Reds soon had enough. They broke into disorganized flight to escape the rain of 20mm shells. But even these small groups were not immune to the continued strafing. Although small arms, automatic weapons, and 4.2 mortar fire took their toll, it was the Marine planes which had broken the back of the enemy assault. Of the 500 enemy who initiated the attack, Corsairs were credited with killing some 300.

Meanwhile, Army troops of the 31st and 32d Infantry on the east side of the reservoir were having their troubles, too. Corsairs on station over 1/32 covered the battalion as it crossed a frozen finger of the reservoir on its way to join 3/31. Repeated strikes kept the Red troops off balance, allowing the Army unit to make the crossing safely.

All the rest of the day 1/32 moved forward under constant cover of planes from VMFs-212, 214, 312, VMF(N)-513, and Hedron-12. Thousands of enemy troops moving south on the road and along the ridges made excellent targets. Red guns and mortars already in position also got their share of napalm, rockets, and bombs. In addition to the cover afforded by Marine Corsairs, much needed supplies were dropped by the Air Force Combat Cargo Command. At times, the FAC found himself directing both air drops from cargo planes and close support strikes over the same radio net. The air was filled with cargo planes, chutes, and agile Corsairs—and all most welcome.

Finally, 1/32 joined the casualty-ridden 3/31. But only after 40 Marine aircraft had hit the enemy with some 225 rockets, 18 napalm tanks, 10 500-lb. bombs, and 29 fragmentation bombs. This ordnance was delivered from early morning until the last flight left its station at 1705.

The thirtieth dawned bright and clear. Snow still covered the field at Yonpo, but a narrow strip of the runway had been blasted clear by the prop wash of planes. It was to be another day of maximum effort in support of Marine and Army troops trapped at the Chosin Reservoir. Beginning with a night strike launched at 0015 and ending at 2000 when the last plane returned to base, Marine pilots flew a total of 146 sorties.

Before dawn, night fighters of VMF(N)-513 and VMF(N)-542 flew three close support sorties. A single Tigercat of VMF(N)-542 made rocket and 20mm strafing runs on enemy troops west of the 3/1 perimeter at Hagaru at 0045. According to the FAC these runs were "right on." Five hours later, two Corsairs of VMF(N)-513 made a very effective pre-dawn strike in support of B Co, 1/5 at Yudam-ni. The ground troops marked their front lines with illuminating hand grenades, permitting the planes to come in close to drop their fragmentation bombs and strafe with 20mm cannon.

At first light, Corsair day fighters began taking off from Wonsan, Yonpo, and the *Badoeng Strait*. By 0650, a two-plane flight of VMF-212 was over Yudam-ni to deliver the first of 36 sorties in support of the 5th and 7th Marines as these two regiments tightened their perimeter and regrouped preparatory to breaking out towards Hagaru the next day. A second flight of two Corsairs from VMF-212 arrived over Yudam-ni at 0730 and was called in by the FAC of 3/5 to strike attacking enemy troops. Diving down, the pilots dropped napalm and fragmentation bombs and fired rockets. By 0740 the attack had been repulsed. In the afternoon, 3/5 was attacked again. Planes of VMF-212 and VMF-312 were called in to strike the attacking enemy, and by 1600 the attack had been contained.

Meanwhile other Corsairs were coming to the aid of a 7th Marines composite battalion which was trying to open the MSR back to Hagaru. Excellent observation was provided by an observation plane (OY) pilot who spotted large bodies of enemy dug in on the high ground on both sides of the road. Planes from VMFs-212, 312, 323, Hedron-12, and VMF(N)-513 were called in and hit the enemy repeatedly. But the Chinese replaced their troops as soon as they were hit, forcing the Marines to break off

the attack and return to the perimeter.

The other isolated Marine units had a relatively quiet day but called in air to strike enemy troops surrounding their positions. Fox Co at Sinhung-ni received 10 sorties, 3/1 at Hagaru 18, and 2/1 at Koto-ri 10.

On the east side of the reservoir, Army troops of the 7th Inf Div had drawn into a defensive perimeter and were under heavy attack. Capt Edward P. Stamford, USMC, their FAC, directed aircraft against the attacking Communists with devastating effect. During the day he directed 38 sorties, making this the major effort of the 1st MAW for the day. From 0645 until 1830 Marine planes attacked the Chinese, dropping 21 napalm tanks, 16 500-lb. bombs, 21 fragmentation bombs, and firing 190 rockets. All attacks on the perimeter were repulsed.

The remaining 34 sorties flown by Marines during the day were directed at targets throughout the X Corps zone of action.

For three days Marine pilots had played a vital role in the defense of the perimeters. Each day had seen an increase in the number of sorties flown, and pilots and planes were beginning to feel the strain of long hours aloft. But they knew that more, much more, was expected of them in the next few days. The Marines were coming out and they were coming out fighting. They were counting on their flying counterparts to help make it possible when the going got roughest, and to strike at the enemy-infested hills along the route of march when no other weapons could be brought to bear.

The Marines took their first steps back or forward, depending on your point of view, on 1 December. The breakout from the reservoir had begun. US & MC

---

*Next Month: 1st MAW in the Breakout from Chosin Reservoir.*

---

**Strike after strike, like this close napalm run, kept the Reds off balance**

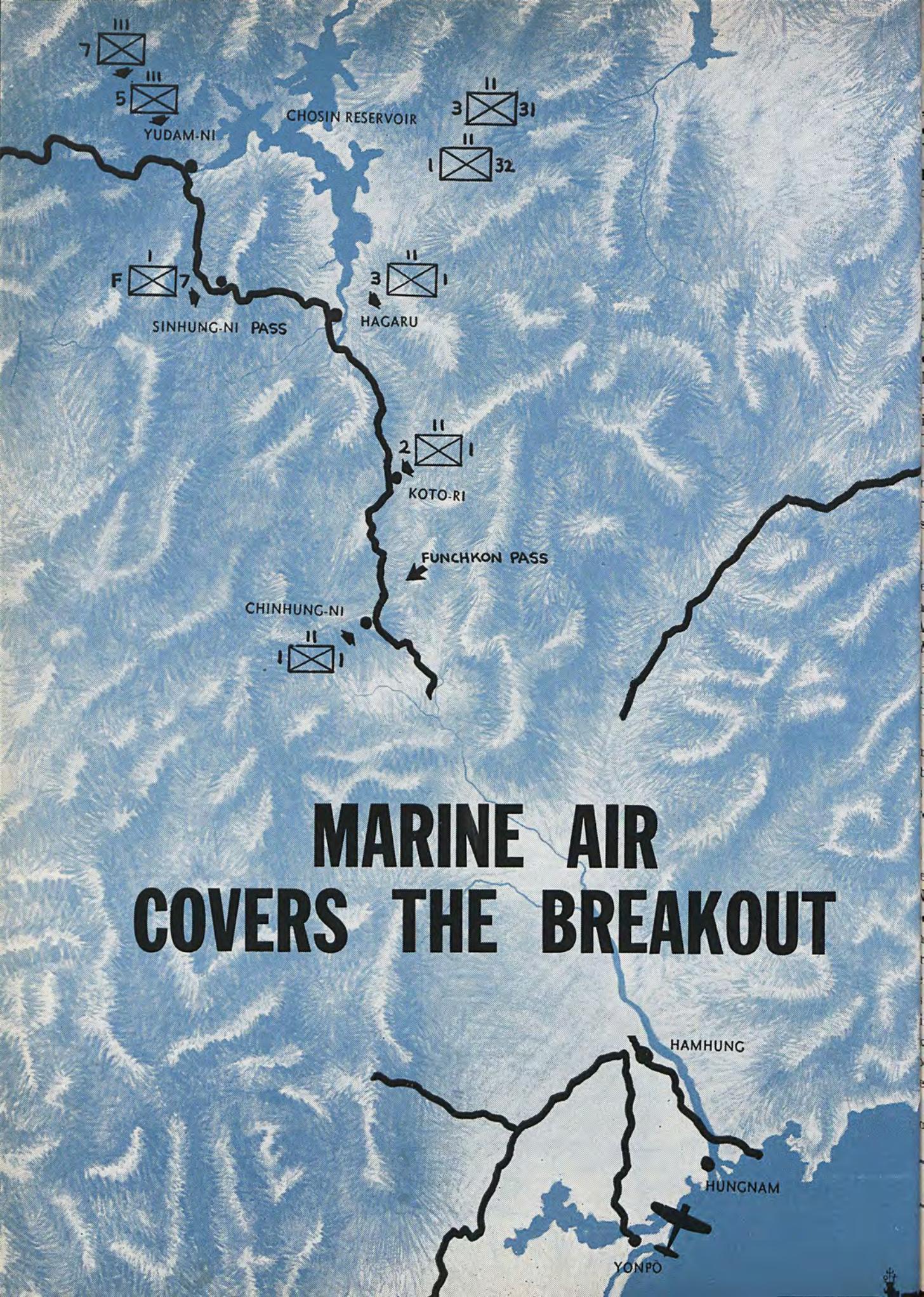


# **MARINE AIR COVERS THE BREAKOUT**

Reprinted from August 1952 issue of The Marine Corps Gazette



*By Kenneth W. Condit and Ernest H. Giusti*



7 III  
5 III  
YUDAM-NI

CHOSIN RESERVOIR

3 II 31  
1 II 32

F I 7

SINHUNG-NI PASS

3 II 1

HAGARU

2 II 1

KOTO-RI

FUNCHKON PASS

CHINHUNG-NI

1 II 1

# MARINE AIR COVERS THE BREAKOUT

HAMHUNG

HUNGNAM

YONPO

ACCORDING TO THE CALENDAR THE TIME WAS LATE fall, but in the rugged mountains of North Korea the rage of arctic weather made a mockery of the seasons.

For three days the 1st MAW had been engaged in a desperate effort to furnish badly needed air support to the embattled men of the 1st Marine Division.\* Grimly clinging to four perimeters, the Marines fought two equally vicious enemies—fanatical Chinese Communists and the cold.

In the freezing twilight of 30 November the news was flashed—the Marines are coming out. Withdrawal was dictated by harsh realities, for the “end the war” offensive launched by UN forces on 24 November had failed when hordes of Chinese Communists troops struck back against the Eighth Army in northwest Korea. The right flank of Eighth Army was overrun, necessitating a rapid withdrawal. Three days later, the Chinese struck X Corps on the east, directing their main attack against the 1st Mar Div. From 80,000 to 100,000 Reds flung themselves in repeated assaults against the Marine perimeters. At Yudam-ni the 5th and 7th Marines held the most advanced position, while single battalions of the 1st Marines defended the strategic towns of Hagaru, Koto-ri, and Chinhung-ni along the MSR. Meanwhile other X Corps units withdrew to more defensible positions.

At Yonpo and Wonsan, and aboard the escort carrier *Badoeng Strait*, the men of the 1st Marine Air Wing girded for a continuation of the all-out effort, for without maximum close air support it was doubtful that the 1st Division could reach the sea. Fifth Air Force assigned the 1st MAW the exclusive mission of supporting the Marines and soldiers of X Corps in the fighting withdrawal to the sea. Serving to brighten the picture further was the promise that the Navy planes of Carrier Task Force 77 would be available for close support, while Fifth Air Force tactical planes would furnish deep support and the Air Force Combat Cargo Command would provide a substantial part of the logistics requirements.

Never in the memory of the oldest Marine had so much depended on a supporting arm, yet never had circumstances conspired so well to prevent Marine air from carrying out its mission. The low sullen overcast which often hid the peaks rising from the Chosin area plateau was an enemy to be feared more than the Chinese Reds. Altimeters gave no warning of the dark gray mass which lurked in the swirling mist and frequently materialized into the ominous bulk of a mountain side or crest. Above certain altitude pilots knew they were safe, but to carry out their close support attacks they often had to fly through or under the overcast. Strikes frequently had

In cooperation with the Historical Branch, G-3, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, the GAZETTE herewith presents another in a series of official accounts dealing with Marine operations in Korea. Prepared by writers and researchers of the Historical Branch, these articles are based on available records and reports from units in Korea. Also to be treated in this series:

1st Engineers in Korea  
1st Tanks in Korea  
Marine Artillery in Korea

Publication is scheduled for consecutive monthly issues. Admittedly it is too soon to write a definitive history of Marine fighting in Korea. Not only are enemy sources lacking, but even Marine and Army records are still incomplete. Articles of the length to be used in the GAZETTE, moreover, do not allow space for more than an outline of operations which will ultimately be given the detailed treatment of a monograph.

But timeliness is also an end to be sought, and these preliminary narratives are based on Marine and Army reports received up to this time. These articles are presented in the hope that GAZETTE readers will feel free to add to the incomplete record. This is an invitation, therefore, for you to supplement the existing record. Send your comments and criticisms, as well as any other information you can make available, to the Historical Branch, G-3, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, Washington 25, D. C.

to be channeled along valleys or ravines, and firing runs had to be initiated from low altitudes with a resulting loss in speed and increased vulnerability.

Added to the burdens of mountainous terrain and overcast skies, the 1st MAW had to overcome staggering maintenance and servicing problems. These difficulties resulted from the decision to abandon Wonsan and concentrate X Corps rear echelon units in the Hamhung-Yonpo-Hungam area. VMF's-214 and 312 and VMF (N)-542 joined VMF-212 and VMF(N)-513 at the Yonpo field.

The concentration of five squadrons at Yonpo led to operating difficulties unequalled in the history of Marine aviation. Though problems of equipment, maintenance, and supply were anticipated; time, weather, and the tactical situation forced the squadrons to operate under the most adverse conditions. The lack of heated space at Yonpo compelled mechanics to perform delicate engine work without gloves. This often resulted in mild cases of frostbite. Great difficulty was experienced in starting engines, and when oil dilution failed, the Marines resorted to warming up engines every two hours through the night. The lack of transportation, bomb handling equipment, and spare parts often threatened the cancellation of scheduled flights. But somehow the obstacles were overcome even if, on occasion, flights were delayed. All available trucks were operated 24 hours a day, running mostly to the ammunition dump for ordnance and to Hungnam for supplies.

Even the normally swift and easy task of rearming and

\*See K. W. Condit and E. H. Giusti, *Marine Air at the Chosin Reservoir*, Marine Corps Gazette, July 1952.

By E. H. Giusti and K. W. Condit

refueling planes became a struggle. The few available refuelers had to be filled directly from 400-pound, 55-gallon drums. Bombs were often unloaded close to the flight line by simply driving the trucks out from under the loads. After manhandling the bombs onto the bomb trailers, the men pulled the trailers to the planes and by pure physical exertion lifted the ordnance up to the racks.

OF PARTICULAR CONCERN to engineering sections was the shortage of spare parts. And it was no wonder that engineering crews prayed that if a plane had to crash, it crashed close to the field where crews could cannibalize the remains. On one occasion when a Corsair was shot down 30 miles north of Yonpo, an officer, two ordnance men, and two mechanics took a jeep to the scene through guerrilla territory to scavenge for vitally needed parts.

Before the 5th and 7th Marines could commence movement along the Yudam-ni-Hagaru road as a coordinated body, units had to be redeployed from the valley extending east from Yudam-ni to the valley running south toward Hagaru. In joint conference, Col Homer L. Litzenberg, CO 7th Marines and LtCol Raymond L. Murray, CO 5th Marines, decided to redeploy by day rather than by night. Certain obvious advantages would have occurred from a movement in the dark but the Marine commanders were willing to forego these, for daylight promised a sky full of Corsairs and better observation.

Plans for 1 December called for all squadrons to furnish close air support flights at dawn. Following the first strikes of the day, planes of the Wonsan squadrons were to land at Yonpo and continue operations from the advanced air base. At Wonsan the snow was light and the first strike, four Corsairs of VMF-214, was winging toward the reservoir by 0645. Aboard the *Badoeng Strait*, VMF-323 was able to get its first flight airborne by 0845. But at Yonpo six inches of snow coated the runway. Lacking snow-removal equipment, Marines substituted makeshift plows and muscle to clear a narrow space on the strip. At daybreak the weather began to lift. By 1000 they had gained enough space to permit the 0645 VMF-214 flight to come aboard, but it was 1215 before VMF-212 could get the first Yonpo strike into the air. In spite of the weather 1st MAW planes flew 118 sorties during the day, almost all in support of the 1st MarDiv and U. S. Army units east of the reservoir.

As the Marines at Yudam-ni began their redeployment on the morning of 1 December, first priority for close support planes went to the 5th Marines holding the perimeter positions north and west of the town. It is a maxim of warfare that an aggressive enemy makes it easy to engage, but difficult to disengage. And that morning the Chinese Reds were proving the truth of the maxim. Both 1/5 and 3/5 were forced to break off fights in order to stick to the redeployment schedule. And air played an

important part in the successful execution of their movements. Four Corsairs of VMF-214 were prowling overhead when at 0810 3/5 began to withdraw its companies. First H Co came, then I Co pulled back. Finally came the turn of G Co, but as the unit withdrew the enemy threatened to attack. At once the forward air controller summoned the Corsairs, and in a few moments they were snarling down to hit the Chinese with rockets, 500-pound bombs, and 20mm shells. As the planes pressed their attacks with repeated runs, artillery and mortar fire joined with air to screen the company. Any aggressive intention the enemy may have harbored was quickly dissipated, and G Co moved to new positions with no further trouble.

Meanwhile another flight of four VMF-214 planes arrived on the scene and relieved the Corsairs on station just as the two engaged companies of 1/5 prepared to execute their withdrawal. Contact between the air and ground was quickly established, and the FAC briefed the flight leader on tactical dispositions, target location and time and direction of attack. As a result, the planes struck the enemy frontline positions just as C Co moved back. Accurate bomb drops and rocket fire kept the enemy off balance until C Co reached its assigned position.

The withdrawal of B Co, however, is another story and one which graphically illustrates the importance of close support. B Co experienced no difficulty in pulling back to the base of Hill 1240, but at this crucial point a breakdown in communications deprived it of air support. Without positive control, planes could not be used to strike in close proximity to friendly lines. To make matters worse, artillery too could not be reached and the Reds had occupied the company's former position on Hill 1240. The company commander had no recourse but to employ leapfrogging machine gun sections for covering fire as the riflemen spurted across the open ground. During this maneuver the Marines were subjected to a withering fire from their previous position on Hill 1240 and casualties were taken. However, vengeance was exacted. When communication was again established, four Corsairs of VMF-312 were unleashed on the Chinese positions, and they hit the area with four 500-pound bombs, 27 rockets, and 3,000 20mm shells.

During the day Marine close support strikes were limited to helping units withdraw, for 3/7, the depleted 1/7, and 3/5 attacked south from Yudam-ni to seize high ground along the road to Hagaru. Repeatedly, air was called in to hit strong points slowing up the advance, and by nightfall the Marines had taken a long step toward "Objective Hagaru."

While the 1st Mar Div received 36 close support sorties during the daylight hours of 1 December, the greatest effort was made in behalf of three Army battalions, 3/31, 1/32, and 57th Field Artillery. A total of 46 sorties were flown in support of these units. For three days these men had fought a grim battle for survival against heavy odds.



Moving along the road by day and defending perimeters by night they had advanced within eight to ten miles of Hagaru when disaster struck.

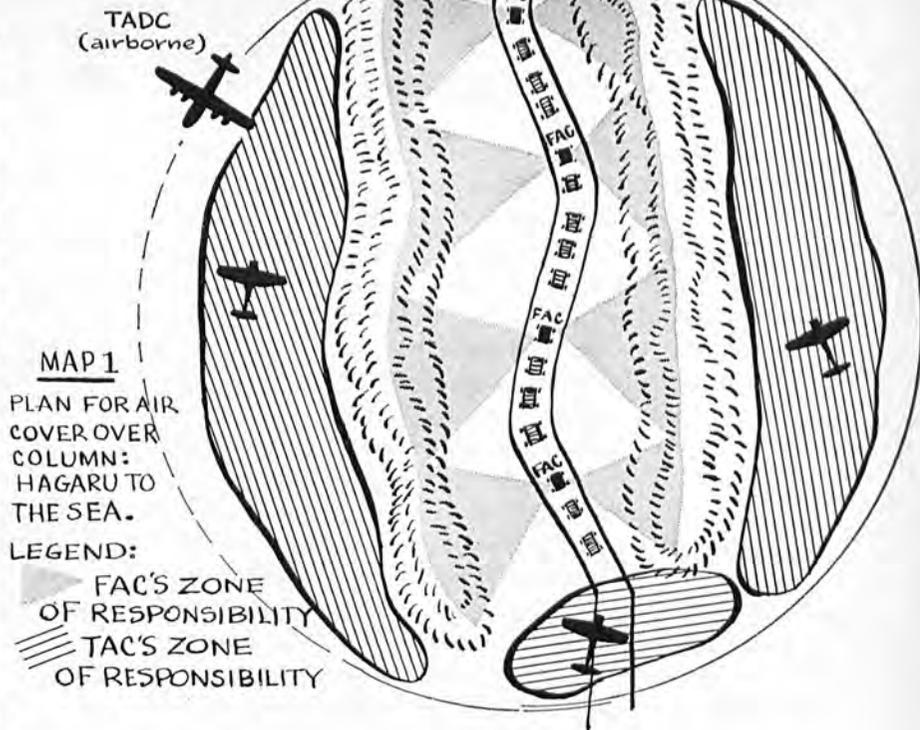
Dawn on the morning of 1 December found the Army units preparing to move out towards Hagaru. Vehicles and guns which could not be taken along were destroyed and wounded were loaded aboard trucks. The convoy was formed and Capt Edward P. Stamford, USMC, who was attached to 1/32 as forward air controller, took his post 20 yards behind the point. Corsairs of VMF(N)-513 and Hedron-12 were on station when the column moved out shortly after 1000. It was fortunate that they were, for just as the convoy started Chinese Reds launched a fierce attack against the head of the column with small arms fire and closed to within grenade range. For a few moments the fighting was touch and go, but Capt Stamford, himself under fire, closely directed the planes in repeated napalm, bomb, rocket, and strafing runs. A rocket from one of the planes was actually fired into a gully only 20 yards from friendly troops, and struck among the grenade-throwing Chinese.

The assorted ordnance dropped by the Corsairs soon proved too strong a dish for enemy stomachs. The Reds broke off their attack and fled for better cover. Marine pilots estimated that approximately 2,000 enemy troops launched the initial assault, and it is doubtful that even half of these escaped unscathed.

By late afternoon every squadron of the 1st MAW had flights hitting the Chinese hordes. All day the pattern was repeated with Marine air striking enemy formations on both flanks, to the rear and in front of the column. Owing to close air support, the progress of the convoy, though slow, was steady, for during daylight the enemy never succeeded in mounting a decisive assault.

At dusk, unfortunately, the column was stopped by a heavily defended roadblock. Dark came on fast, and air support dwindled, then became non-existent. In the black hours of the night the enemy finally overwhelmed the Army battalions. For the next two days flights of Marine planes occasionally located and supported isolated groups of Army troops attempting to reach Hagaru. Many did, but the three battalions as such had ceased to exist.\* Though darkness chained the majority of Marine planes to the ground, the tired and cold men fighting at the reservoir knew they still could depend on limited, but effective, air support from specially equipped night fighters.

At Yonpo the first night heckler flight was off the deck at 2000. Through the night Tigercats of VMF(N)-542 and Corsairs of VMF(N)-513 were constantly on station over the scattered fighting fronts. The Marines had learned that Chinese artillery and automatic weapons fire



dropped off sharply when the hecklers were overhead. Gun flashes revealed the enemy's guns, and Marine night fighters had proved that they could knock them out. In addition, Marine FACs had the means of directing these planes in strikes close to friendly lines.

The night of 1-2 December was typical. Outside Hagaru Tigercats struck a Red troop concentration, knocked out a howitzer, and halted an enemy jump-off in the southern sector of the perimeter. At Yudam-ni both the 5th and 7th Marines utilized Tigercats to subdue enemy fire. Corsairs struck troop concentrations at Yudam-ni, Hagaru, and Koto-ri. With one exception, the strikes of both night flying squadrons were positively controlled by FACs.

Dawn on the morning of 2 December was clear with unlimited visibility. By 0705 flights from both *Badoeng Strait* and Yonpo were pointing toward the Yudam-ni area, for 2 December was to be the crucial day of the march to Hagaru. Just south of Yudam-ni the convoy of the 5th and 7th Marines, loaded with equipment and wounded, was preparing to move out. Before it lay 14 to 16 miles of tortuous and icy roads through mountainous terrain swarming with Chinese Reds. The key terrain feature along the route was 4,000-foot Sinhung-ni Pass midway between Yudam-ni and Hagaru. Wisely, Col Litzenberg had placed F Co 2/7 at the pass even before the Chinese counterstroke of 27 November. For five days this company with the aid of close support had beaten off every enemy attempt to seize this strategic point. By 2 December it had suffered 140 casualties, but

\*Capt Stamford was captured during the night, but escaped and made his way to Hagaru the next morning.

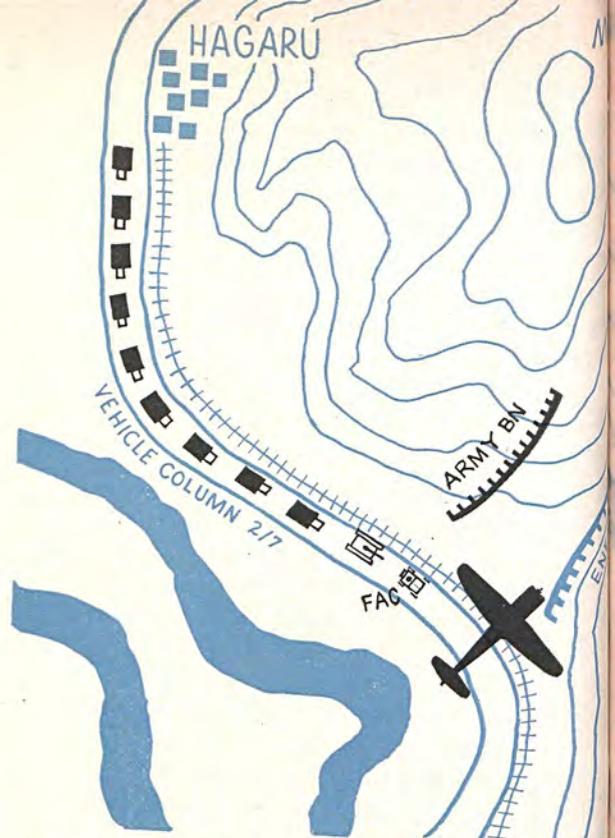
still clung to the vital piece of real estate, and 1/7, after an epic night march, was approaching the pass as relief.

The first day-fighters aloft on 2 December were those of VMF-323 and VMF-212. Both flights were passed to the control of 2/5 which, acting as rearguard for the column, was engaged in a bitter and important fight. Strongly entrenched Chinese troops on Hill 1276 west of the MSR overlooked the Marine train and posed a threat to its movement. An attack by F Co 2/5 supported only by 4.2 mortars had failed to gain the hill top. At 0730 however, Corsairs were directed to hit the enemy positions with napalm. The napalm fell short, but the attack was continued with rocket and strafing runs as F Co renewed its assault.

The company reached the crest of the hill quickly, but heavy machine gun fire from the reverse slope made the position untenable. The Marines withdrew a safe distance and requested another air strike using napalm and 500-pound bombs. A new VMF-323 flight of four planes carrying the requested ordnance was made available immediately. In a matter of minutes the FAC oriented the flight and pinpointed the enemy position. This time the heavy ordnance was right on target. Blasted and burned by the bombs and napalm, the terrified enemy deserted his positions, as the Corsairs continued their attack with rocket and 20mm strafing runs.

While this fight was in progress, the column had moved out. By the time the Marine planes finished their runs, the train had advanced to a point where possession of Hill 1276 no longer had tactical value. Therefore, 2/5 withdrew to its next selected rear guard position. Meanwhile the anxiously awaited news had arrived—1/7 had reached the vital pass.

Moving slowly, the roadbound column was in constant danger of heavy attack. But if vehicles and heavy supporting weapons were committed to the road, Marine infantry was not. Progress was achieved by rifle units



seizing the high ground on both sides of the road, while other units attacked astride the road and defended the rear. Thus, the vehicle train actually advanced as the center of a moving perimeter.

During daylight, air support was constantly available 360 degrees around the perimeter. It was frequently requested, and when requested, always provided. On the main axis, FACs moved with infantry units to the front and rear, on the flanks, and in the column itself. Attack on any target within 2,000 yards of the road was under the positive control of the FACs. Beyond 2,000 yards enemy troops and positions were attacked as targets of opportunity. In this way enemy not already in position along the MSR had first to contend with the devastating attacks of the fighter planes. The Chinese Reds who survived these

strikes and penetrated to positions close to the column invariably came under attack by Marine air and ground elements protecting the train. Never was the enemy able to mount an attack in force against the column.

So well did this system work that the enemy found himself more often the defender than the aggressor. This was the case when heavily defended roadblocks stopped the column in the late afternoon. Twenty-two planes, including Navy aircraft, were used to help break

### Mortarmen had a new rule-of-thumb—clear the tails of the planes



through the enemy resistance. Following artillery and 81mm preparation fires, Marine and Navy planes pounded the enemy position with bombs and blanketed it with the searing fire of napalm tanks. Close on the heels of the last strike the Marines jumped off in assault, and those Chinese who survived the aerial attack were disposed of by bayonet-wielding infantrymen while still huddled in their foxholes.

Throughout the day the men of the 5th and 7th Marines had been treated to an amazing spectacle of concentrated and varied air activities. With as many as 40 to 60 tactical planes circling, diving, and climbing in the limited air space, heavily laden C-119s dropped supplies, observation aircraft scurried back and forth through the welter of cargo chutes, and helicopters fluttered down to evacuate the seriously wounded.

With the coming of darkness however the sky was soon empty of planes and the Marines were left largely to their own resources.

Night was the favorite Chinese time of attack, for during the dark hours they were free to mass their troops and move close to friendly lines without paying an exorbitant price to Marine air. The night hours passed anxiously as the column and its protective screen of infantry units slowly advanced toward the pass. But it soon became clear that the enemy had been so badly mangled in the day-long fighting of 2 December, that he was unable to mount an assault strong enough to threaten the column.

On the morning of 3 December a low overcast again delayed take-offs from Yonpo and the *Badoeng Strait*, but by 1000 the ceiling had lifted enough to permit Marine planes sky room for close support. Throughout the day the pattern of 2 December was repeated. The Marines fought their way up through the pass, employing the deadly combination of air and ground attack to overcome enemy resistance. Contact with 1/7 was made in the early afternoon, and the worst was over.

By 1900 on 3 December the head of the column had reached Hagaru, but it was the middle of the next afternoon before the rear elements were safely in the town. The Chinese persisted in their small-scale attacks up to the very rim of the perimeter. The last strike was called only three-fourths of a mile from Hagaru. And it was fitting that the last vehicle of the column to enter the perimeter was the jeep of the FAC who directed this strike.

During the day the 1st MAW flew 91 close support sorties, 50 in support of the 1st Mar Div and the remainder in support of other X Corps units.

The arrival of the 5th and 7th Marines made the Hagaru defenses so strong that the Chinese dared not risk attack. They preferred to wait until the Marines were most vulnerable, on the march with their vehicles, equipment and wounded. Through 4 and 5 December the Ma-

rines took advantage of the lull in fighting to catch their breaths and prepare for the next leg of the journey to the sea.

But there was no respite for Marine fliers. On 4 and 5 December they flew a total of 297 sorties against enemy positions, vehicles, and troop concentrations throughout the reservoir area.

The next day saw Marine air return to its primary role of close support for ground troops, for on 6 December the 1st Mar Div broke out of Hagaru. Its immediate objective was Koto-ri, where 2/1 and attached Army troops were holding out. The 7th Marines, reinforced by a composite Army battalion, moved out first. Following the tactics used so successfully on the withdrawal from Yudam-ni, the high ground on each side of the road was to be secured by two battalions advancing on the flanks. A third battalion was to be at the head of the column and another was to serve as rear guard. The 5th Marines was to hold the Hagaru perimeter until all other units, supplies, and equipment had been moved out. Then the regiment would withdraw, escorting its own vehicle train and deployed like the 7th Marines.

Air planning was primarily concerned with assuring the maximum support for the moving column. Drawing on experience gained on the breakout from Yudam-ni, Marine commanders spotted FACs at intervals along the column and with each flanking battalion. They were supplemented by two tactical air co-ordinators (TACs) flying ahead and to the flanks of the column (Map 1). These co-ordinators, experienced Marine pilots flying Corsairs, were to seek out enemy forces out of sight of the FACs.

A further step taken to improve control of close air support was the organization of an airborne tactical air direction center. A four-engine R5D transport, hastily equipped with additional communications gear, was provided by VMR-152, and by 6 December the "flying TADC" was ready to begin operations. From its station above the column this control agency was in an excellent position to communicate with all aircraft and ground units. In mountain terrain, where the smaller types of radios were very limited in range, this was an important consideration. Until the 1st Mar Div reached the coast, the airborne TADC controlled all aircraft supporting the division.

While Marine staff officers were perfecting these plans, the air strength with which to carry them out was depleted by the departure of VMF-212 for Japan on 5 December. Assigned to the carrier *Bataan*, the squadron did not go aboard ship and return to the scene of operations until after the Marines had reached the sea.

However, the four remaining squadrons were determined to increase their efforts. By 0715 on the morning of the 6th the first Marine planes, 18 Corsairs of VMF-214, had reported on station over Hagaru. They were

assigned a mission in support of 2/7, and what followed was typical of Marine close support operations (Map 2). After advancing about 2,000 yards, the column had been stopped by enemy fire from a ravine about 100 yards east of the road. The Army battalion, acting as flank guard on that side, was deployed within 75 to 100 yards of the enemy and was also pinned down.

The 2/7 forward air controller, riding in a jeep immediately behind the lead tank of the column, contacted TAC, briefed him on the situation, and directed him in a dummy run. When he was certain that the TAC had located the target, the FAC ordered a live run with 20mm cannon fire and a napalm tank to mark the spot.

Meanwhile, the other aircraft were monitoring the radio net so that they also were familiar with the target. With the arrival of eight Navy planes from the carrier *Leyte*, 26 planes were now overhead. They were divided into three flights and orbited at 8,000, 9,000, and 10,000 feet respectively.

☛ THE FIRST FLIGHT OF EIGHT PLANES was called in and attacked with rockets and proximity-fused 500-pound bombs. They worked over the target but did not silence it, so the second flight was called in. With this flight a different technique was used. In order to conserve ammunition and keep the aircraft on station as long as possible, only every other plane fired. The others made dummy runs. But since the enemy fire was not stopped by this procedure, the pilots were all ordered to fire.

An hour had passed since the column first halted. Koto-ri was still eight miles away. Precious daylight hours were dwindling, so Col Litzenberg came forward to confer with the FAC. The 7th Marines' commander decided to move the column out under the fire of aircraft as they made their runs across the road and parallel to the Army battalion frontline. This put the target within 100 yards of friendly troops in both range and deflection.

The pilots of the next flight, the planes from the *Leyte*, were informed individually of Col Litzenberg's decision and ordered to attack. Followed by four Corsairs of VMF-323, they swooped down. All planes strafed the target with 20mm shells, the projectiles passing about 75 feet over the column. So accurate was the fire that not one Marine or soldier was hit.

While the planes made their runs, the ground troops let go with everything they had. The 81mm mortar shell trajectories were higher than the altitude of the attacking planes, but rather than lose firepower, the gunners were told to aim at the tails of the planes. Using this rule-of-thumb method, the mortarmen lobbed shells between the attacking aircraft. As the column moved down the road, new flights took up the attack, so control of the strikes was passed back along the column from one FAC to another. All day long planes continued to hit this target, keeping it neutralized until the column had passed.

As the Marine column moved towards Koto-ri, other departures from normal procedures cropped up. For example, in situations where the FAC was not in a position to control a strike, he sometimes worked through the infantry unit commander. In one instance, when a platoon of F Co, 7th Marines was held up on the left of the road by about 200 Chinese, the platoon commander requested an air strike. Since the FAC was unable to see the target, he had the platoon commander pass the information to him on the regular battalion tactical net. He, in turn, relayed it to the flight leader on his high-frequency set. Thus, by the resourcefulness of the FAC, a close support strike was carried out successfully on a target he could not see.

☛ WHILE FACs ON THE GROUND controlled most of the planes flying close support missions, their efforts were supplemented by the TACs. Ranging ahead and to both sides of the column, these pilots directed attacks on enemy out of sight of the controllers on the ground. The TACs were particularly effective in directing strikes against enemy troops massing out of range or sight of the ground troops for assaults on the column. In their bunkers and other dug-in positions, the Chinese had some degree of protection. But troops massing on the barren snow-covered hills were particularly vulnerable. Repeatedly Marine pilots broke up these troop concentrations, compelling the enemy to confine his efforts to the delivery of fire from prepared positions.

Meanwhile, Marine pilots were busy in other parts of the battlefield. Back at Hagaru they supported an attack by the 5th Marines designed to capture high ground east of the town. They also flew missions in support of the other X Corps units, the 3d and 7th U. S. Infantry Divisions and the I ROK Corps. By evening of 7 December, the rear guard of the division was within the 2/1 perimeter at Koto-ri. During the two-day withdrawal from Hagaru to Koto-ri Marine planes had flown a total of 240 sorties in support of X Corps. Of these, 201 were in close support of ground troops. The 1st Mar Div received 138; the 3d Inf Div, 11; the 7th Inf Div, 39; and the I ROK Corps, 12. In addition, the X Corps was supported by 245 sorties flown by Navy carrier planes and 83 sorties by the Air Force. The latter were mostly supply drops, but the Navy devoted most of its efforts to close support.

☛ COMBAT MISSIONS WERE NOT the only ones flown by Marine pilots. They also participated in resupply and casualty evacuation flights. Although these jobs were primarily carried out by the Far East Air Force Combat Cargo Command, Marines of VMO-6, VMR-152, and Hedron 1st MAW bore a hand. Air drops were made primarily by C-119s of Combat Cargo Command, reinforced by 5 R5Ds of VMR-152 attached to the Air Force for this purpose. A few air drops were made by the Marine

1st Air Delivery Platoon, using a handful of C-47s and C-119s borrowed from the Air Force and four or five Marine R4Ds.

Casualties were evacuated from Yudam-ni, Hagaru, and Koto-ri under the most hazardous conditions. At Yudam-ni only light observation planes (OYs) and helicopters could land. C-47 strips were constructed at Hagaru and Koto-ri, but both strips were extremely short. At Koto-ri the 2/1 FAC, who was a qualified landing signal officer, guided planes in as though they were landing on a carrier deck. From these strips a total of 4,675 Marine and Army wounded were flown out safely. Air Force C-119s and C-47s, reinforced by a few attached Marine R4Ds, flew out most of these. VMO-6 also helped evacuate casualties. Their OYs and helicopters, reinforced by three TBM aircraft on 7 December, flew out 163 during the first 10 days of December.

With its arrival at Koto-ri, the 1st Mar Div had completed all but the last leg of its fighting withdrawal. All that remained was to descend the precipitous gorge of Funchilon Pass to the safety of Chinhung-ni on the plain below. At this village, where Army troops of the 3d Inf Div had arrived in strength, the Marines would board trucks for the journey to Hungnam and evacuation by sea.

MARINE COMMANDERS PLANNED to use the same scheme of maneuver they had used so successfully before. But this time the main body of the division would be assisted by 1/1. From its position at Chinhung-ni, this battalion was to attack up the gorge and seize dominating Hill 1081. The one complication was a blown bridge in the gorge at a spot where it was impossible to bypass. Combat Cargo Command fliers came to the rescue by air-dropping six sections of a Treadway bridge which Marine engineers planned to put in place the next day.

On 8 December, the morning scheduled for the resumption of the attack, foul weather deprived the Marines of all air support. A raging blizzard grounded all planes, delayed the repair at the blown bridge, and bogged down the ground attack so badly that only slight gains were made. But the morning of the 9th was bright and clear. From carriers steaming off shore and from Yonpo, Corsairs took off for a full day of strikes.

By 0715 a two-plane flight from VMF-312 was over the target, attacking positions on both sides of the road. Flights from all the other Marine squadrons followed and kept up a continuous attack. Other Marine planes supported the assault of 1/1 on Hill 1081 and covered Marine engineers putting in the Treadway bridge. As on previous days, aircraft were controlled by the airborne tactical air direction center, which circled the target area and assigned aircraft to various FACs and TACs.

The air effort was continued on the 10th and morning of the 11th, as the Marine division continued to move down through the pass towards Chinhung-ni. Some very

effective strikes were directed by the FAC of 1/1 from the top of Hill 1081. He was in an excellent position to observe the action in the gorge below and called strikes on enemy machine gun positions along a railroad embankment and on a hill overlooking the road. One particularly effective strike was made by four Corsairs of VMF-312. After bombing a group of houses along the railroad with 500-pound general purpose and 265-pound fragmentation bombs, the pilots dived down to make strafing runs. About 200 enemy troops were killed as they ran out of the shattered buildings.

Once the Marines had successfully passed over the Treadway bridge, they had little difficulty in closing Chinhung-ni that night. The next morning they began moving to Hungnam by truck, and by 1300 on 11 December the last units had cleared the town.

With the departure of the 1st Marine Division for Hungnam and evacuation by sea, the main task of the 1st MAW was finished. In anticipation of the event, VMR-152 and Combat Cargo Command had begun evacuating supplies and personnel from Yonpo on the 10th. On 14 December the three land-based fighter squadrons, VMF-312 and VMF(N)s-513 and 542, departed for Japan. Control of all aircraft in the X Corps zone passed to Commander Task Force 90 afloat, on the same day. And by 18 December the evacuation of all equipment and personnel of the 1st MAW had been completed.

The fighting withdrawal was over, and Americans everywhere felt a distinct relief. But as the details of the epic fight unfolded, relief became tinged with awe. A Marine division and a Marine air wing, fighting against seemingly insuperable odds, had severely mangled an enemy vastly superior in strength. Trapped at the Chosin Reservoir miles from the sea, the ground Marines had turned into aggressors and battled their way out despite anything that the enemy, the terrain, or the weather could do to prevent it. Yet they were the first to demand that a large share of credit for the successful withdrawal go to their flying counterparts in the 1st MAW. For in the hour of greatest need, Marine airmen had not faltered. The utmost had been demanded of the 1st Wing and the utmost had been given. MajGen O. P. Smith, Commanding General of the 1st Marine Division, expressed the sentiments of all when he said:

"During the long reaches of the night and in the snow storms many a Marine prayed for the coming of day or clearing weather when he knew he would again hear the welcome roar of your planes as they dealt out destruction to the enemy . . . Never in its history has Marine Aviation given more convincing proof of its indispensable value to the ground Marine. A bond of understanding has been established that will never be broken." USMC

---

*Next Month: 1st Engineers in Korea*

---



# **ALL IN A DAY'S WORK**

## **The Engineers and Shore Party in Korea**

Reprinted from September 1952 issue of The Marine Corps Gazette



*By Lynn Montross*

CHOSIN RESERVOIR

HAGARU-RI

HAMHUNG

KOTO-RI

HUNGNAM

WONSAN

INJE

SEOUL

INCHON

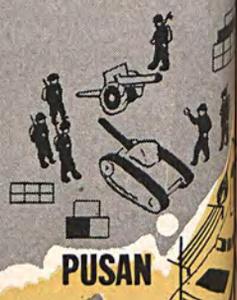
HAN RIVER

Japan Sea

Yellow Sea

# ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

## The Engineers and Shore Party in Korea



♦ IT IS ALWAYS THE BALL CARRIER, OF COURSE, WHO wins the applause when the crowd at the stadium goes wild with enthusiasm. The man running interference may have set up the touchdown, but he must content himself with the recognition of a few spectators who know the game.

By the same token, it is seldom that the general public gives the supporting arms enough credit for the ground gained by the infantry. Even newspaper correspondents sometimes fall into this error, but the men of the rifle companies know better. They know that the objective might never have been taken if the supporting arms hadn't done such a competent job of running interference.

No better examples could be found in the 1st Marine Division than the engineers and shore party—jacks of all military trades and masters of them all. Although their functions may coincide or even overlap, one is an old member of the military family and the other a newcomer. Engineers have been helping to win wars since the day of Alexander the Great, but it took the U. S. Marine Corps to create a shore party unit where none had existed before.

The time was late in 1941, and the occasion the New River amphibious training exercises. Since the turn of the century the Marine Corps had been approaching its mission of amphibious warfare, but it was not until the 1930s that modern techniques were shaped in annual training exercises held in cooperation with the Navy. At the North Carolina base an object lesson was taught when an entire Marine rifle battalion had to be pulled out of simulated combat and used for unfamiliar duties on the beaches, including the unloading of boats. The Marine Corps responded by organizing and training specialists for such tasks, and this was the conception of the shore party.

Many of the secondary missions of the new unit, it is true, have been from time immemorial the job of the pioneer infantry—such light engineering tasks as road upkeep, salvage operations, and maintenance of supply dumps. But when the chips are down in an amphibious assault, the shore party comes into its own with such specialties as reconnaissance and marking of beaches, unloading ships, controlling traffic, removing mines, setting up communications, and establishing dump and supply points.

Napoleon had a word for it. "I may lose battles," he once remarked, "but I do not lose minutes." This might well have been the motto of the Marine engineers and shore party at Inchon. For there were no minutes to spare when the 1st Mar Div hit the beaches on 15 September 1950 as the landing force of X Corps. The planners had deemed it necessary to take several calculated risks, and

In cooperation with the Historical Branch, G-3, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, the GAZETTE herewith presents another in a series of official accounts dealing with Marine operations in Korea. Prepared by writers and researchers of the Historical Branch, these articles are based on available records and reports from units in Korea. Also to be treated in this series:

1st Tanks in Korea  
Marine Artillery in Korea  
1st Medical Bn in Korea

Publication is scheduled for consecutive monthly issues. Admittedly it is too soon to write a definitive history of Marine fighting in Korea. Not only are enemy sources lacking, but even Marine and Army records are still incomplete. Articles of the length to be used in the GAZETTE, moreover, do not allow space for more than an outline of operations which will ultimately be given the detailed treatment of a monograph.

But timeliness is also an end to be sought, and these preliminary narratives are based on Marine and Army reports received up to this time. These articles are presented in the hope that GAZETTE readers will feel free to add to the incomplete record. This is an invitation, therefore, for you to supplement the existing record. Send your comments and criticisms, as well as any other information you can make available, to the Historical Branch, G-3, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, Washington 25, D. C.

they put it up to the engineers and shore party to win a critical race against time and tide in the rain-swept darkness of D-day.

The 1st Engineer Battalion was commanded by LtCol John H. Partridge and the 1st Shore Party Battalion by LtCol Henry P. Crowe. Each unit had been represented by a company in the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, so that neither battalion was complete until the remaining elements arrived for the Inchon landing. A good deal of field experience had been acquired by the men who served in the brigade, and the others had received shipboard instruction as well as some practical training at Kobe.

Harbor topography and an extreme tidal range of 31 feet made Inchon a hard nut to crack for an amphibious operation. As if the narrow and winding channel did not offer difficulties enough, the inner harbor was commanded by the enemy shore batteries of Wolmi-do Island. Even after this barrier had been passed, the only feasible approach to Inchon consisted of a narrow strip of mud flat surmounted by a sea wall. Over these beaches, if such they might be called, two Marine regiments had the problem of capturing an Oriental seaport of 250,000 inhabitants in a few hours.

The solution, as Navy and Marine planners saw it, lay in the risk of a double-barreled assault utilizing both periods of high tide. Wolmi-do was to be taken early in the morning, and the attack on the mainland deferred until later afternoon even though the enemy would have the whole day for final preparations. As an added risk, eight LSTs, combat-loaded with high priority supplies for the Inchon assault, were to be beached at H+30 under the muzzles of enemy guns. Engineers and shore party

**By Lynn Montross**

specialists had the task of unloading these supplies before the morning high tide, so that the LSTs could be retracted and other ships beached with more supplies and equipment.

Green Beach of Wolmi-do offered less trouble on the morning of D-day than had been anticipated. Enemy shore batteries had already been unmasked and silenced after the destroyers of Joint Task Force 7 goaded them into premature fires. So effective were the preliminary naval bombardments and air strikes that little organized resistance was met by the landing force, the 3d Bn of the 5th Marines. Progress might have been most costly, however, if a squad of engineers had not been on hand to remove some 300 Russian antipersonnel bombs. The shore party was represented by a team which unloaded LSTs, assisted by the engineers as more of their units landed. Off-shore mud flats prevented the solid beaching of these craft, so that corduroy roads had to be hastily built out to the ramps. Enemy small arms fire interfered at times, but the engineers took a few prisoners without incurring any casualties of their own.

During the next several hours the engineers and shore party elements swarmed over the battered island, transforming it into an advanced base for the assault on Inchon. The 1,000-foot concrete causeway leading from Wolmi-do to the mainland was scanned for mines, then repaired so that Marine tanks could cross. A good day's work had already been accomplished before 1730, when the landing boats churned the water as naval gunfire and rockets made the Inchon target area heave with explosions.

The 5th Marines were to hit Red Beach, opposite the heart of the city, while the 1st Marines landed on Blue Beach in the rear of the peninsula on which Inchon was located. Low visibility led to confusion and delay on both beaches, and not enough ladders had been provided for the infantry to scale the seawalls. The result was chaos in some areas when the advance elements of the engineers and shore party landed at 1800 on Red Beach. Fortunately, the preliminary bombardment had reduced enemy resistance to sporadic small arms and mortar fire.

THE SHORE PARTY reconnaissance section put up the beach markers under automatic weapons fire which riddled the center marker while it was being erected. Some measure of order was soon restored as traffic controls were instituted. But it was not until 1910 that the eight LSTs approached Red Beach, bringing more engineer and shore party units as well as cargo. This delay meant that little or no daylight would be left for the unloading of the supplies vitally needed by the two combat regiments driving into the city.

No calculated risk of D-day was fraught with more serious consequences, but the planners had not erred in

depending on the engineers and shore party. The light of a burning brewery furnished illumination as the dozers punched holes in the seawall. Each of the LSTs was loaded with 100 tons of block cargo to be manhandled—50 tons of ammunition, 35 tons of rations, and 15 tons of water. Progress was slow at first, since the cramped and crowded strip of beach did not permit the normal location of dumps. But the engineers and shore party were experts at this job, and as early as midnight they had the situation under control. All of the LSTs were unloaded and beach exit roads constructed before the deadline of the morning high tide.

On Blue Beach, with its difficult offshore conditions, the assault plan called for 10 pre-loaded LVTs to be beached with high priority supplies for the 1st Marines. These craft were so delayed that they mired down after encountering receding tides. Shore party units planned to unload them by hand across the mud flats, but the assault on Inchon made such good headway that the supplies were not needed before the morning high tide.

Traffic direction, POW control, evacuation of casualties, and road construction were some of the other jobs handled by the engineers and shore party during the assault. The logistical problem did not end when more LSTs reached Red Beach on the morning tide, for several of them grounded too far out in the mud flats for unloading. But the supply crisis had been safely passed by the afternoon of D+1, when it became evident that the tidal basin could be made operative without major repairs.

Twenty-four hours after the first landings, Inchon had been secured and the two Marine assault regiments were poised for the drive inland toward Kimpo Airfield and Seoul. This same afternoon, the great concerted offensive of the Eighth U. S. Army opened in southern Korea. Thus while X Corps advanced on the enemy's principal airfield and communications center, the Eighth Army would be hammering at him from the opposite direction. The purpose of these combined operations was nothing less than the destruction of the 13 divisions of the North Korean Army which had driven almost to the southeastern tip of the peninsula. United Nations forces had been trading space for time since the first Communist aggressions, but now at least they were ready to strike a decisive blow.

At Inchon the beachhead was expanded so effectively during the first 36 hours that the X Corps landing force never lacked for essential supplies. This logistical support enabled the two reinforced Marine infantry regiments to drive eastward at dawn on 17 September, taking parallel routes for a final converging advance on Seoul. The 5th Marines seized Kimpo Airfield that afternoon as the 1st Marines pushed along the main highway toward the industrial suburb of Yongdongpo. Meanwhile the Marine engineers and shore party were preparing for their next



Marine engineers ran a ferry service on the Han

big job—the crossing of the Han. That broad tidal river lay between the Leathernecks and Seoul, and every hour of grace aided the defenders of a capital claiming 1,500,000 inhabitants before the war.

Planning as well as execution of the river crossing was left by X Corps to the 1st Mar Div. Marine engineers had shipped out from Kobe with 7,000 tons of gear, but they had only 300 feet of M4A2 bridging. This total fell more than 100 feet short of being enough to span the Han at a site chosen primarily for tactical purposes. The obvious solution, therefore, was a ferry made up of rafts for the crossing of the tanks and heavy vehicles.

At 0800 on the morning of the 19th the Marine engineers shoved off from Kimpo with their bulky equipment just as the 5th Marines crossed the Han in amphibious landing craft (LVTs). The attack on enemy forces defending the right bank reached its height as the engineer column swelled the torrent of combat traffic on the single road. Four hours of actual construction work were required to assemble the six pontoon M4A2 sections, powered at first by assault boats and later by LCVPs trucked from Inchon. And at 1300 the first Marine tanks were crossing in support of the infantry.

A second ferry was put into operation the following day, and advance elements of the 1st Shore Party Bn arrived to share in its maintenance. This unit now reverted to 1st Mar Div control after having taken part in Inchon port development under the operational control of the 2d Engineer Special Brigade. On the 20th, as the 5th Marines met increasing resistance across the river, shore party teams established evacuation stations and supply dumps on both banks while regulating LVT and DUKW traffic.

Operation of the two ferries gradually passed from the engineers to the shore party. The tidal range and muddy

banks limited the crossings to periods of low tide, so that traffic regulation was of prime importance when a long train of vehicles accumulated. Cargo trucked to the south bank was reloaded in LVTs or DUKWs, and the shore party set up a traffic circle that would not interfere with ferry operation.

In the zone of the 1st Marines the engineers and shore party found it necessary on 22 September to replace a 120-foot span of a bombed concrete bridge across the canal at Yongdongpo. Work was delayed several hours that afternoon until enemy mines could be removed from a cleverly-concealed field on the far bank. Then it was discovered that the concrete bridge was about two feet narrower than the outer panel of the double-single Bailey bridge used to span the demolished section. The engineers solved this problem by placing massive timbers over the concrete to support the outer panel of the Bailey bridge. And though the resulting structure was not a gem of architectural beauty, vehicles were crossing over it by 1730 the following afternoon.

On the 24th the shore party regulated river traffic as the 1st Marines crossed the Han opposite Yongdongpo in LVTs and DUKWs. Elements of the 7th Marines had already moved up to the left of the 5th Marines, after debarking at Inchon on the 21st. Thus for the first time the 1st Mar Div was operating with three infantry regiments abreast as the assault on Seoul reached the stage of street fighting. The enemy had not neglected his opportunities for mining routes through the city, and the grim job of removal fell, as usual, to the engineers.

When the Inchon-Seoul operation came to a successful finish on 7 October, the engineers and shore party had the job of outloading from Inchon for a new X Corps amphibious landing on the other side of Korea. Wonsan was to be the objective of an assault originally scheduled



for the 20th. Not much time remained, of course, for the planning and execution of a landing to be followed by a drive across the peninsula to unite with the Eighth Army and cut off the escape of the fleeing remnants of the beaten North Korean Army.

So thoroughly had that army been beaten, however, that its collapse made the new operation unnecessary. In the west the Eighth Army advanced by leaps and bounds to take the NK capital, Pyongyang. And on the eastern coast two ROK divisions of X Corps occupied Wonsan without a fight. There was nothing left for the 1st Mar Div except an administrative landing on the 25th after a week of delay while enemy mines were being removed from Wonsan harbor.

Planning for the landing had been based on the report of a 1st Mar Div advance party flown to Wonsan under the command of LtCol H. H. Figuers, executive officer of the 1st Shore Party Bn. Two other officers and 15 enlisted men from this unit were also included.

Unloading at Wonsan commenced on the night of the 25th, with shore party groups being assigned the responsibility for the beaches. Problems were posed from the outset by sandbars offshore and areas of deep sand between the water line and solid ground. Tractors had to be used to pull wheeled vehicles to high ground, and sand ramps were built out into the shallow water to facilitate unloading from small boats. Despite such difficulties, the

work continued around the clock as floodlights provided illumination for the cranes at night. Meanwhile, though no enemy action developed, shore party elements set up a perimeter defense on the exposed flank of the southern beaches.

On the 31st, after six days of unremitting effort, the job was finished. Bulk cargo amounting to 18,402 tons had been put ashore in addition to 4,731 vehicles. Shore party units moved into the dock area of Wonsan with a mission of improvement and operation, and on 6 November the battalion was put under X Corps control to unload the 3d Inf Div.

Meanwhile, the 1st Eng Bn was tackling every conceivable engineering task. While one unit operated a sawmill, other Marine engineers were busy repairing

railway, converting coaches to stretcher cars, building bridges, constructing strips for observation planes (OYs), establishing water points, destroying hoards of enemy explosives, and wiring the new division forward command post and hospital at Hamhung.

In addition to their other duties, the engineers doubled as infantry. On 3 November, when the 7th Marines fought it out with a Chinese Communist division on the advance to Hagaru, a squad of Dog Co, 1st Eng Bn, filled a gap in the line at a critical moment. This was only one of the firefights in which engineers participated before the invaders from Red China had enough.

If any undertaking could be singled out as most important, it was probably the improvement of the main supply route from Hamhung to Hagaru. At a time when optimism prevailed both in Tokyo and Washington, the command of the 1st Mar Div took a soberly realistic view of the situation. Although the Chinese had withdrawn after their first contacts early in November, the Marines prepared for trouble by repairing the mountain road until it was fit for tanks.

A preliminary survey made with tank officers indicated that the difficulties were formidable. From the railhead at Chinhung-ni to the Chosin Reservoir, the sharply-winding trail might have been described in many areas as a narrow shelf with a cliff on one side and a chasm on the other. Long stretches would have to be widened, or re-

enforced, and a good deal of work remained to be done on bridges, by-passes, and culverts.

So essential was the task that all available engineer units were drawn from other assignments. The Chinese were not the only new enemy, as cold weather added to the trials of the engineers by the second week of November. Much of the power of the dozers had to be expended on breaking soil frozen as hard as concrete. And though the pan could be filled only with difficulty, it was almost as hard to empty when damp earth stuck to cold steel.

Techniques often had to be altered or improvised, and the engineers came up with some ingenious solutions. Lt Nicholas A. Canzona managed even to solve the problem of heating a river inexpensively. His platoon of Able Co had the job of replacing a blown span of a concrete bridge on the MSR east of the reservoir. It was necessary to install a new pier between existing concrete piers, but every attempt to sink a foundation in the river bottom was futile—the water soon froze again after holes had been chopped in the ice.

Canzona thought of digging a dam site upstream to create a new channel, and he tried to keep the water in a fluid state by heating it with 55-gallon drums of burning oil. The consumption of fuel proved to be prohibitive, but the engineer officer was not stumped. Finding a large quantity of carbide left by the enemy in Hagaru, he filled his drums and generated a hellish temperature with the new fuel. At the cost only of keeping the carbide wet and lighted, Canzona was able to divert part of the stream into a new channel while his platoon constructed the pier foundation.

Enemy demolitions might have multiplied the troubles of road maintenance and repair if the North Koreans had not allowed such large hoards of explosive to fall into the hands of the Marines. In a single three-day period, from 15 to 17 November, the engineers burned 103,700 pounds, or nearly 52 tons, of Russian dynamite stored in the Sudong area.

By the 18th the MSR had been improved to such an extent that the first tanks got through from Chinhung-ni to Hagaru. That same day found the engineers breaking ground for an equally important project ordered by the command of the 1st Mar Div—the construction of a C-47 airstrip at Hagaru. Supplies and ammunition were being

trucked forward to that base as the Marines continued to make ready for a possible CCF counterstroke.

The engineers had just finished OY strips at Koto-ri and Hamhung. Snow added to the difficulties of the Hagaru job, and motor graders and 5.8-cubic-yard scrapers were sent up from Hamhung. Apparently the Marine engineers were plagued by "sidewalk contractors" even in sub-zero weather, for this dry comment appears in a field report of 20 November:

"Dozer work was pleasing to the eye of those who wanted activity but contributed little to the overall earth moving problem of 90,000 cubic yards of cut and 60,000 cubic yards of fill."

On the 22d, with the strip 10 per cent complete, lower temperatures made it almost impossible for the dozers to get a bite of the granite-like earth. The engineers paused only long enough to weld steel teeth on the blades. But when the pan was filled, the earth froze to the cutting edges until it could be removed only by means of an air compressor and jack hammer.

Under these circumstances, it is not remarkable that the Hagaru airfield was far from complete when the Chinese struck in overwhelming numbers on the night of 27-28 November. The amazing thing is that Marine engineers had managed in only 10 days and nights to make the strip operative for C-47s. During the next 10 days hundreds



The map showed a road, but engineers found this

of wounded and frostbitten men would owe their lives to this achievement which permitted them to be evacuated by air. The C-47 pilots deserve equal credit for the skill and daring of their landings on an inadequate strip, since not a single casualty was lost in a plane crash.

The enemy made a tremendous effort to shatter the Hagaru perimeter, and service troops from more than 20 outfits fought alongside the 3d Bn of the 1st Marines. Some of the engineers took part as infantry, and others continued to work on the airfield, regardless of enemy sniping at men silhouetted by the floodlights.

On the night of the first onslaught the Chinese actually swept over the field and took momentary possession of engineer equipment. Then Lt Robert L. MacFarland organized a group of his own men and headquarters personnel for a counterattack. Naturally, the engineers were annoyed at this interruption to their work. And in the words of their commanding officer, Col Partridge, they "started out after the Chinese and kicked them off the strip."

The successful defense of Hagaru provided a base for the 5th and 7th Marines when they cut their way through from Yudam-ni. During this march the engineers were often out in front, their dozers removing wrecked vehicles, destroying enemy roadblocks, or constructing by-passes.

The engineers also had a share in the fighting breakout of the 1st Mar Div from Hagaru to Hamhung. They participated as infantry in a dozen hot clashes, and at Koto-ri they added 300 feet to the OY airstrip, so that C-47s could land. Thanks to this accomplishment, another wholesale evacuation of casualties occurred as the long column of vehicles wound its way toward Chinhung-ni.

On 9 December the headlines of the world marvelled at the airdrop of a 24-ton Treadway bridge to the Marines by the Combat Cargo Command. Less spectacular but no less vital was the assembling and installation of the sections by the 1st Eng Bn. For the division faced the

prospect of abandoning all its vehicles and equipment unless the engineers could put a floor over 29 feet of gaping space left when the Chinese blew a bridge at a point where no by-pass could be constructed.

The engineers could and did. First it was necessary to transport the steel sections in Brockway trucks during a blinding snowstorm on the night of the 8th. A hole in the road brought the train to a halt, but the engineers always were resourceful. Lacking any other material, they packed the hole with snow which held up while some 1,700 vehicles passed.

In the morning, before starting work on the bridge, the engineers had a fight for possession of the area with the Chinese pouring in mortar and automatic fire. The enemy was evicted with a heavy loss in killed and wounded as well as some 60 prisoners. Once these preliminaries were out of the way, it took only three hours to rebuild the abutment with railway ties and install steel treadways widened with plyboard sections. At dusk on the 9th the first vehicles crossed. At this moment of triumph a new disaster threatened when the tread of a tractor crashed through a plyboard section. But the engineers succeeded in extricating the vehicle and making immediate repairs. And on the 11th they blew the bridge after the division had brought out its equipment to Hamhung.

Now it was the turn of the Marine shore party, as General Douglas MacArthur ordered the redeployment of X Corps to southern Korea. Thus was initiated the "amphibious operation in reverse" as 100,000 troops, 90,000 Korean refugees, and 350,000 measurement tons of cargo were outloaded from Hungnam and other ports in two weeks.

Thanks to the engineers, blown bridges failed as obstacles



The possibility of enemy action could not be discounted, but the naval guns of Task Force 90 and strikes of Navy, Marine, and Air Force planes kept the enemy at a respectful distance while the 3d Inf Div held the Hungnam perimeter.

The 1st Mar Div was first to sail, but most of the shore party elements stayed for the finish. They had a leading part in the planning as well as execution of the X Corps outloading, and on occasion they took a hand at providing security.

Meanwhile a short party detachment had gone ahead to Pusan and Masan to unload the 1st Mar Div on its arrival. The division went

to Eighth Army reserve, and in January came the "Pohang guerrilla hunt" as the infantry cut to pieces an NK division that had infiltrated through the mountains into southeastern Korea.

The remainder of 1951 found the Marines committed to large-scale land operations as a unit of the Eighth Army. In operations Killer and Ripper they were the spearhead of X Corps in the slugging advance from Wonju to Hwachon. And during the CCF counteroffensives of April and May the Leathernecks returned to the operational control of X Corps on the eastern front. There

they were holding an important sector in the Punchbowl area when operations came to a standstill with the summer's truce conferences.

Road maintenance was such a problem in the Korean mountains that the endless task absorbed most of the efforts of the shore party as well as engineers. Supply depended entirely on human transport in the more rugged areas, and the engineers had responsibility for hiring and supervising hundreds of South Korean porters organized into companies. This employment provided food and wages for the refugees, and it was often the sole means of bringing food and ammunition to the combat troops.

For weeks, the engineers and shore party had only such routine jobs as road upkeep, mine removal, and supply or salvage operations. Many of the original officers of both battalions were rotated in the summer of 1951, and LtCol John F. Kelsey took command of the engineers as LtCol H. H. Figuers and LtCol Harry W. Edwards succeeded in turn to the shore party command. There must have been days when their men never wanted to see a Korean road again, but even the versatile engineers and shore party sometimes came up against a task they had never encountered before.

One of these rare occasions took place in April after a unit of the 1st Mar Div captured the Hwachon dam. The Chinese had recently opened the gates to flood the surrounding area and cause some delay in military operations. Eighth Army ordered that the gates and penstocks be jammed so that the enemy could not repeat if Hwachon fell into his hands again. IX Corps had no record of an available dam expert, but it was the conviction of Col Partridge that "if you look hard enough in an engineer battalion in a Marine division, you can find anything."



During the breakout, road-clearing dozer crews took casualties along with the infantry

This proved to be true when the engineers produced two hitherto unrecognized hydrostatic specialists, one of whom was preparing a thesis for his PhD degree. Unhappily, the knowledge of these experts was never utilized, for the Chinese reoccupied Hwachon in their April counteroffensive after Eighth Army ordered a general withdrawal.

A few months later the shore party varied its routine by helping to create the tactics of the future. The opportunity was provided when the 1st Mar Div jumped off in the Inje-Changhang area of eastern Korea as the Eighth Army launched a new drive after a quiet summer. On 11 October 1951, the 3d Bn of the 7th Marines made tactical history with a helicopter landing behind the main line of resistance.

The commanding officer was LtCol Edwards, lately of the 1st Shore Party Bn, and a platoon of his old outfit had charge of loading and landing operations. While one section stowed gear into the helicopters, the other section prepared to hit the ground first with machetes and clear a site for the infantry landings.

The success of this first large-scale helicopter lift may have opened up new and exciting possibilities for tomorrow's amphibious operations. So rapidly have tactics developed in the Korean testing ground that only a rash prophet would dare to predict the course of events. But at least it is certain, whatever the future may hold, that the Marine engineers and shore party will be in the foreground as usual, running interference for the combat troops.

USMC

*Next Month—Marine Tanks and Armored Vehicles in Korea.*

# **MARCH OF THE IRON CAVALRY**

## **Marine Tanks in Korea**

*By Lynn Montross*





# MARCH OF THE IRON CAVALRY

## Marine Tanks in Korea



THERE IS NO DOUBT AS TO WHEN MARINE TANKS first saw action in Korea. They had a part in the very first fight of the 1st Marine Brigade in the Pusan Perimeter, and Marine tanks have been poking their 90mm noses into trouble ever since that August morning in 1950.

From the beginning, Company A of the 1st Tank Battalion let no moss grow under its treads. Activated at Camp Joseph H. Pendleton on 7 July 1950, the outfit consisted largely of men trained with the M4A3 medium tank and the 105mm howitzer. Most of the gunners and loaders had never fired a 90mm gun from an M-26 tank until that day, when Capt Gearl M. English held a brief weapons familiarization session at the Pendleton tank range. Four days later Co A embarked from San Diego with the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade commanded by BrigGen Edward A Craig. And on 7 August, a month after activation, the men were firing 90mm shells down the throats of the enemy in a tense sector of the Pusan Perimeter.

Already the men of Co A had learned a lesson that all good tankmen must absorb sooner or later. They learned that while an M-26 may resemble a mechanical rhinoceros, it can be as sensitive on occasion as a platinum watch. This truth was impressed upon Co A during its second day at sea when 14 of the 17 new tanks were badly damaged by salt water flooding the forward part of the ship's well deck. Maintenance men put in tremendously long hours throughout the voyage on repairs, and they had all but one of the machines ready for combat when the brigade landed at Pusan.

On 7 August, the first day of action for the Marines, the tank company had three men wounded by enemy artillery fire while moving up to jump-off positions in the Chindong-ni area. Here the brigade and Army 5th RCT were placed by Eighth Army under operational control of the 25th Infantry Division for a counterattack along the Masan-Chinju-Hadong axis to stop the North Korean invaders driving toward the vital port of Pusan.

The Marine tank company was in the thick of it from the beginning. On 8 August the 2d platoon supported the advancing Marine infantry with 90mm fire. Meanwhile the 1st platoon was given the mission of recovering 4.2 mortars left behind by an army unit compelled to withdraw under heavy NK automatic fire. Two tanks succeeded in bringing back three mortars and most of their ammunition without any casualties.

Within a few days Co A learned lessons in maintenance such as are taught only in the school of combat experience. Tank No. 33 developed acute carburetor trouble during the forward movement, and No. 12 showed its

In cooperation with the Historical Branch, G-3, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, the GAZETTE herewith presents another in a series of official accounts dealing with Marine operations in Korea. Prepared by writers and researchers of the Historical Branch, these articles are based on available records and reports from units in Korea. Also to be treated in this series:

Marine Artillery in Korea  
1st Medical Bn in Korea

Publication is scheduled for consecutive monthly issues.

Admittedly it is too soon to write a definitive history of Marine fighting in Korea. Not only are enemy sources lacking, but even Marine and Army records are still incomplete. Articles of the length to be used in the GAZETTE, moreover, do not allow space for more than an outline of operations which will ultimately be given the detailed treatment of a monograph.

But timeliness is also an end to be sought, and these preliminary narratives are based on Marine and Army reports received up to this time. These articles are presented in the hope that GAZETTE readers will feel free to add to the incomplete record. This is an invitation, therefore, for you to supplement the existing record. Send your comments and criticisms, as well as any other information you can make available, to the Historical Branch, G-3, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, Washington 25, D. C.

perversity by breaking four fan belts in rapid succession. These machines were soon restored to mechanical health, but No. 13 had to be disarmed and later destroyed after crashing through a single-span concrete bridge. Then No. 11 threw a track while crossing the stream bed, making it necessary for the column to stop for four hours and complete a by-pass.

These were samples of the things that could happen to a tank and downgrade it from a cruising fortress into a stationary target. But the men of Co A made such rapid progress that they handled their machines expertly on the fifth day of the advance, which brought their hottest fight of the entire operation.

The 5th Marines had driven almost within sight of Chinju, the brigade objective, when the 1st Bn was counterattacked near Sachon. Concealed NK troops were spotted before the Marine infantry entered a defile covered by machine guns on both sides of the road. Even so, the enemy had the advantage of prepared positions on the high ground as the M-26s of the 3d platoon shouldered into the fight. Rice paddies made it impossible to maneuver off the road, but the tanks blazed away with machine guns and 90mm rifles. Lucrative targets of opportunity were provided by two enemy groups, numbering about 100 men each, attempting to reach the hills on both flanks. Marine tanks and infantry killed or wounded an estimated 125, and the remnants took a hard pounding from Marine artillery and air strikes.

The tanks of the 3d platoon were under fire from three sides, and No. 33 cut down seven fanatical North Koreans who came within 25 yards. Not a single machine was disabled by the enemy, however, and only one developed

**By Lynn Montross**

mechanical trouble during a four-hour action. Afterwards the M-26s doubled as field ambulances by evacuating seriously wounded infantrymen taken into the escape hatches.

That night, with the final objective within grasp, CG 25th Inf Div ordered the withdrawal of the Marines as well as the Army troops advancing on Chinju by a parallel route. Enemy pressure on the Naktong Bulge threatened the central front, and Eighth Army directed that the brigade be sent to this critical area under operational control of CG 24th Inf Div.

☛ AT THIS PERIOD, with the war only seven weeks old, the Red invaders had used their material superiority to push U. N. forces into a corner of southeast Korea. Eighth Army had perforce adopted a strategy of trading space for time until reinforcements could land. But the Pusan Perimeter must be held at the risk of losing vital supply routes and ports, for the enemy was trying desperately to break through while he retained the advantage in weight.

In this situation the Marines found a mission as "firemen" — an air-ground team that could be shifted from one endangered sector to another as a mobile reserve. Eighth Army was launching counterattacks to prevent an enemy build-up, and on 17 August the brigade jumped off in combination with Army infantry against the Communists who had driven across the Naktong river. The struggle for Obong-ni ridge raged for a day and night, but the Marines finally evicted the enemy. Their capture of this key terrain feature led to a North Korean rout on the 18th, with Marine air and artillery pounding the fugitives.

As yet the tankmen of Co A had not encountered any of the enemy's Russian-built T-34 tanks. The first meeting with the "caviar cans" took place at sunset on the 17th, when four of them ventured around a road skirting Obong-ni ridge. The 3d platoon had been alerted in time for its tanks to surprise the first NK machine at a range of 100 yards. No. 34, in the lead, set it on fire with three rounds of armor-piercing, scoring fatal hits. In a few more seconds the fourth T-34 beat a retreat after the second and third had been destroyed by a combination of tank, 75mm recoilless, and 35-inch rocket fire. No damage resulted to Marine armor from the near misses of an estimated 15 rounds of NK antitank fire.

☛ THE BRIGADE'S ANTITANK COMPANY, commanded by 1stLt A. S. Bailey, treated the enemy tanks to 29 rounds of 75mm recoilless. This year-old unit, whose functions were not too well understood by many Marines at the time, was to make itself better known in Korea. Packing a terrific wallop with its recoilless rifles, rocket launchers, and .50 cal. machine guns, the antitank company even had

its own platoon of M-26s at a later date to assist in killing enemy tanks.\*

This first Marine tank battle, if such it could be called, gave our tankmen a low opinion of North Korean tactics which subsequent encounters only confirmed. Even granting that the enemy was handicapped by lack of air power, he failed too often to use his armor in co-ordination with infantry for mutual protection. And after keeping his tanks idle for days, hidden from air observation, he was too likely to swing to the opposite extreme and sacrifice several machines in an overbold attempt to surprise Marine infantry.

In spite of such lapses, NK armor was much more effective in the next operation, when nine T-34s were expended in a frantic attempt to stop the Marines at all costs. The brigade, which had been in assembly areas since being relieved near Obong-ni on 19 August, was attached to the 2d Inf Div for a new counterattack on 30 September. The scene was the familiar Obong-ni area now in possession of North Koreans mounting their long expected all-out offensive to smash through the UN perimeter to vital supply ports.

☛ THE MARINE ADVANCE of the first day rolled back and the enemy determined to keep up his momentum. Nevertheless, the two assault battalions gained ground against a heavy concentration of NK artillery, mortar, automatic and AT fire. The tanks of Co A, working as usual in close coordination with the infantry, were credited with destroying four T-34s during the day. Again the enemy sent his machines into action without proper infantry support, and Co A tanks finished them off easily in one-sided gunnery duels.

The attack continued next day to the second objective over ground littered with NK slain and wrecked equipment, including two more T-34s knocked out by Co A tanks. Not until the afternoon of 5 September, as the Marines advanced an additional 2,500 to 3,000 yards, did the T-34s finally succeed in bringing off a surprise. Rounding a bend in the road, three of them came upon unseen on Marine tanks firing in support of the infantry. Two M-26s were disabled by the first enemy bursts though the crews managed to escape. Other Co A tanks were unable to fire in return, being blocked by the disabled machines in the narrow road. But all three T-34s were speedily destroyed by 3.5-inch rockets of the 1st B and antitank company thus ending the last Marine tank action of the Pusan Perimeter. That afternoon the brigade was ordered by Eighth Army to proceed to Pusan, after relief by 2d Inf Div elements, and prepare for embarkation.

\*"75s Up," by 1stLt Earl R. Delong, published in the GAZETTE of August 1952, gives an interesting and instructive description of this comparatively new Marine unit.



**Pusan Perimeter — For a month-old outfit, A Co was doing all right**

A new chapter of Marine tank operations opened on the eve of the Inchon-Seoul amphibious assault, when Co A was absorbed into its parent organization, the 1st Tank Bn commanded by LtCol Harry T. Milne. The other letter companies had sailed from San Diego on 18 August, landing at Kobe on 1 September to begin plans and preparations for the Inchon landing on the 15th. This speeded-up schedule did not allow much time for training, and few gunners and drivers were experienced in driving or firing the M-26, having been instructed only with the M4A3. Some of the reservists, however, had only the most basic knowledge even of the latter machine. Thus the recent combat experience of Co A was an asset to the entire battalion on D-day, when MajGen Oliver P. Smith's 1st Mar Div hit the beaches as the assault force of X Corps.

A platoon of Co A tanks landed on Wolmi-do in the morning, and the other two platoons went ashore on Red Beach in Inchon late that afternoon. No enemy armor was encountered, but the M-26s did good work in infantry fire support and mopping up operations.

With the seaport secured, Marine tank officers had keen anticipations of the prospects for battle during the advance of the two assault regiments from Inchon to Kimpo airfield and Seoul. Here the terrain was comparatively level for Korea, and it might be supposed that enemy tanks would put up a stiff fight to defend the chief Communist airfield and communications center.

The first kill was credited to Marine air on the 16th, however, when the Corsairs made scrap out of six T-34s spotted in the zone of the 1st Marines. Marine tanks did not have their turn until the next day, when they helped to teach the enemy a lesson in one of his favorite tactics. Units of the 5th Marines had been ambushed several times in the Pusan Perimeter, and they took grim pleasure in setting a trap for enemy tanks observed at dawn as they sallied forth in defense of Kimpo. Three platoons of infantry were posted in concealment on high ground overlooking the road; the rocket launchers and 75s took positions farther back, and the tanks of Co A remained in the rear to open proceedings with 90mm fire.

This time the enemy showed more tactical sense by sending about 200 infantry to protect the six T-34s. But all were doomed when the first rounds of the Marine tanks gave the signal for bazookas, 75s, and machine guns to pour in their fire. The result was sheer annihilation. Within a few minutes the NK tanks and infantry were wiped out of existence, and the spectacle of destruction greeted Gen Douglas MacArthur on his first trip of shore inspection.

Only light resistance awaited the rest of the way to the airfield, which was secured late that afternoon. While other units of the tank battalion were attached to the 5th Marines, Co B accompanied the 1st Marines on a parallel route toward Yongdungpo, an industrial suburb of Seoul. And these untried tankmen came through a baptism of

fire on D-plus-2 that would have tested veterans.

The infantry of George Co was mounted on the tanks to spearhead the regimental advance along the main Inchon-Seoul highway. Enemy automatic and small-arms fire stopped the column repeatedly, compelling the riflemen to dismount and deploy on both sides for a combined tank and infantry assault. Five attacks of this sort had to be launched, with the guns of the tanks supplying the only available supporting fires of the final three-hour battle.

It was a rugged assignment for tankmen who refueled from the pump of an amtrack, though enemy fire made the crews take to cover several times. But Co B gave a good account of itself, destroying the only enemy tank encountered that day as well as several antitank guns and machine gun emplacements.

The tanks resumed the attack along with the infantry

ing of the 20th with the crossing of the river Han in the sector of the 5th Marines. This operation was facilitated by the armored amphibian vehicles of the division. After the assault troops crossed in LVTs, their ammunition and supplies followed in DUKWs. Two platoons of Co A tanks were ferried over to support the infantry, which secured a foothold by 1500 and dug in for the night.

Up to this time the enemy had been conducting delaying actions, but during the next four days he put up a last-ditch fight as the two Marine assault regiments converged on the approaches to Seoul. The tanks of Co A took part across the Han in the assault of the 5th Marines from the northwest. In this rugged area the enemy literally had to be blasted out of strong hill positions, and the 90mm rifles were needed to supplement the howitzers of the 11th Marines.

On a typical day, the 22d, it was estimated that Co A



Seoul — 90mm guns cut the barricades down to size

at dawn and advanced for eight hours, destroying an AT gun, an artillery piece, and an unestimated number of infantry. Co B was relieved late that afternoon by Co C, which was alerted to prepare for a large-scale enemy tank attack in the morning. This effort did not materialize, and the new tankmen were held up in their advance by the most extensive mine field encountered so far by Marines in Korea. After the lead tank was disabled by an explosion, the other machines fired in support of the infantry as engineers cleared the road.

When the threatened NK tank attack took place on the morning of the 20th, Co C was delayed by a machine miring down in a roadside rice paddy. Meanwhile the enemy met a hot reception from the bazookas of the infantry, and three of the T-34s escaped after the other two were destroyed.

The advance on Seoul went into high gear on the morn-

tanks destroyed 16 AT guns, several machine guns, and about 200 enemy. Four continuous hours of firing caused one Marine tank crew to pass out from heat and fumes, and the M-26 had to be towed out of position by another machine.

After the crossing of the Han by the 1st Marines on the 24th, the enemy attempted next morning to ambush two platoons of Co B tanks accompanied by a section of flame tanks. But the Marines were not caught napping, and the flame tank fired short bursts which sent the attackers scurrying into the machine gun fire of the M-26s. A first group of about 15 North Koreans surrendered, and 116 comrades soon came in with uplifted hands. In addition, an estimated 150 were killed.

It may have seemed to the men of the 1st Tank Bn that they had already tackled nearly every sort of tactical chore, but a new experience awaited in the street fighting



Obong-ni Ridge — Russian-made T-34 tanks didn't live up to their publicity

of the battle for Seoul. Tank support was needed continually by the two infantry regiments driving through an oriental city which had a pre-war population of a million and a half. The battle actually consisted of a hundred bitter little battles at the barricades defended by a concealed enemy. First, the Marine tanks and infantry fired in protection of the engineers probing for antitank mines; then the 90mm guns cut the barricade down to size; and the tanks and infantry moved forward with artillery and air support to take the position. There followed a brief lull for evacuating the wounded, and once more the weary Leathernecks went into action against the roadblock a few hundred yards down the street.

On 26 September, at the height of the street fighting, contact was made about 25 miles south of the city by an



Korean road-builders didn't figure on tanks

Army unit of X Corps with elements of the Eighth Army which had launched a coordinated offensive on the 16th. This meant that all the NK forces in South Korea were threatened with destruction, and the enemy began a disorganized retreat to the northward.

☛ WHILE THE 1ST AND 5TH MARINES took up defensive positions outside Seoul after securing the city, the 7th Marines drove northward toward Uijongbu on the 30th with a mission of blocking the main road leading to Pyongyang, the NK capital. This infantry regiment, which had landed a week after D-day, was supported by Co D tanks. The enemy had heavily mined the area, and no engineers were available to clear the way for tanks as the infantry prepared to assault Hill 171 near Suyu-ri. Armored support was needed so urgently, however, that three Co D tanks were given the mission of advancing. Plans were made for the lead tank to detect mines as best it could and crack or detonate them with bow machine-gun fire if possible. The next two machines were to follow in track, and the little column crept forward safely while four mines were being detonated. Then the third tank failed by inches to track the others, and two blown road wheels resulted. The first two tanks completed a perilous advance of 1,000 yards and knocked out an AT gun while killing an estimated 50 enemy.

This was not a typical operation, of course, and Co D worked out an effective system of giving fire protection to engineers who rode the point tanks and dismounted to remove mines. The tanks were often the targets of small-arms fire which the enemy had learned to aim at antenna bases, periscopes, and vision cupolas. Sometimes, too, hidden foes let a tank go past, then fired on the rear of the turret. Fortunately for the tankmen, North Korean

marksmanship was poor, and AT mines remained the weapon most to be respected. Remarkably few casualties were incurred by Co D, and two of them resulted from a freakish bullet penetrating the bore of a 105mm gun when the breech block was open and wounding men of a dozer tank.

Enemy tanks made only one noteworthy appearance during the drive to Uijongbu. As a preliminary the Marine armored column ran into heavy NK mortar fire which scored three hits on the lead tank. The .50 cal machine gun mount and radio antenna base were destroyed and the hull set on fire. But the crew extinguished the flames after backing 200 yards to a less exposed spot, and within an hour the machine was in action again. The column continued to move ahead through mortar shells supplemented by the fire of four camouflaged enemy tanks. Luckily an air strike had been called to work over the mortars, and the Corsairs swooped down just in time to destroy the first of the T-34s. Two others were killed by the fire of Marine tanks at a range of 300-400 yards, and the fourth enemy machine waddled away to safety.

Uijongbu fell to the 7th Marines on 3 October, and four days later the 1st Mar Div was relieved by Eighth Army elements. During the three weeks of the Inchon-Seoul operation the 1st Tank Bn had inflicted hundreds of casualties at a cost of one man killed and 48 wounded. The tankmen had destroyed every T-34 venturing within range of their guns — sometimes with only one 90mm round — but not a single Marine tank had been put out of action permanently by enemy tank fire. And even the Marine tanks disabled by mines had not been damaged beyond repair.

On 25 October, when the 1st Mar Div began an unopposed landing at Wonsan, the North Korean remnants

were taking the count. The end of the war seemed in sight as the Marines and three other X Corps divisions moved northward toward the Yalu. Then the Communists of Red China came to the rescue early in November, and the 7th Marines tangled with the 124th CCF Division on the advance from Hamhung to Hagaru.

IN THE ENSUING FOUR-DAY BATTLE the Chinese took such a beating that the crippled division was pulled back into reserve afterwards. Enemy attacks of 3 November were supported by two tanks, one of them escaping after the other was knocked out by the 75s and bazookas. During the next day's advance the infantry surprised five more CCF tanks, four of which were destroyed by air strikes combined with 75mm recoilless and 3.5-inch rocket fire.

These experiences appear to have been taken very seriously by the Chinese generals, for they never again attempted to use tanks against the Marines in the Chosin Reservoir fights. On the other hand, Gen Smith showed his confidence in Marine armor by giving the engineers the mission of making the Hamhung-Hagaru main supply route fit for tanks as soon as possible. Meanwhile the components of the 1st Tank Bn were distributed over an area 112 miles in length, supporting infantry battalions carrying out a variety of blocking and patrolling missions.

Not until 18 November did the first tanks of the battalion test the winding stretch of mountain road from Chinhung-ni to Hagaru. A provisional platoon of M4A3 dozers made the first trip, since it was feared that the heavier M-26s might have trouble. But the engineers had strengthened the MSR sufficiently, and it remained only to await LSTs for water transport of the tank companies completing their detached duties in the Wonsan, Majong-ni, and other areas to the south.

Only a few M-26s had reached Hagaru when the great

A tank-infantry team moves in for the kill



CCF counterstroke cut off the 5th and 7th Marines near Yudam-ni on the night of 27 November. The route from Hagaru to Yudam-ni was glazed with ice, and that afternoon four M-4 tanks slid off the road. Three of them managed to cover the four miles back to Hagaru, but the other was lost that night to the enemy.

After the M-4 tanks ran into difficulty, a lone tank of D Co was sent to Yudam-ni. It was believed that the heavier M-26 might be better suited to icy going, and this proved to be true when No. D-23 arrived without incident. The crew returned in the last truck convoy to Hagaru to lead other tanks the next day. But the enemy set up roadblocks a few hours later, and D-23 was left stranded at Yudam-ni.

Tank and infantry patrols attempted without success on the 28th to clear the MSR of enemy roadblocks to the south as well as north of Hagaru. Meanwhile the Co B tanks at Chinhung-ni and Co D tanks at Majon-dong were ordered to move up to Hagaru as reinforcements. A few miles past Koto-ri the first group was stopped by strongly defended enemy roadblocks and compelled to return. Men and supplies were so urgently needed at Hagaru, however, that a truck convoy with tanks and infantry set out from Koto-ri on the 29th. Known as Task Force Drysdale, after LtCol D. B. Drysdale of a British Marine company, the column was made up of this contingent, a company each of Marine and Army infantry, and several hundred service troops. The tanks were in the front and rear when the convoy was stopped near the halfway point to Hagaru by the mortar and automatic fire of an estimated three CCF battalions.

The enemy attacked not only the head but also the middle of the column, setting several trucks on fire. As darkness approached to curtail Marine air support, a message from 1st Mar Div headquarters at Hagaru emphasized once more the need for supplies and reinforcements. The head of the column fought its way through with heavy casualties, therefore, as the Marine infantry company and most of the British Marines advanced with



Hagaru — Icy roads gave M-4 tanks plenty of trouble

the tanks. By this time the trucks and service troops in the middle of the column had been cut off, front and rear, and most of the survivors were forced to surrender at dawn after running out of ammunition. The tanks and trucks in the rear were able to make their way back to Koto-ri.

The two platoons of tanks at Hagaru had been hard-pressed by the first Chinese attacks. All the sub-zero night of 28-29 November the enemy came on in overwhelming numbers, trying to break through a perimeter manned only by three companies of combat troops plus every clerk, cook, and truck driver capable of pulling a trigger. The Marine tanks set fire to several shacks harboring CCF troops, and large enemy groups recklessly gathered about the flames for warmth. They became the targets for 90mm and 105mm fire, and 652 CCF dead were counted within 200 yards of the tanks.

In the morning three tanks were sent on the perilous mission of determining the location of enemy roadblocks south of Hagaru. The Chinese swarmed to the attack with satchel charges as well as AT rifle grenades. One of the grenades lobbed into an open hatch and glanced from the cupola padding to the tank commander's shoulder before dropping harmlessly. Fate was in a benevolent mood that

day, for a sachel charge placed on another tank also failed to do any damage. And after firing on the enemy for half an hour, the three machines turned on the frozen ground and got back safely to the defense perimeter.

☛ THE NEED FOR reinforcements at Hagaru had justified the risks of Task Force Drysdale, but the result made it plain that even large detachments ran the danger of being overwhelmed by sheer weight of numbers. It was decided, therefore, that the 5th and 7th Marines were to come out of Yudam-ni in full force, so that the reunited division could fight its way from Hagaru to the seacoast.

The presence of the empty tank at Yudam-ni was reported to CO, 7th Marines, who requested that a crew be sent by helicopter. This assignment went to a Co C crew, and No. D-23 led the column when it moved out on 2 December.

Armored warfare was necessarily limited to small operations in mountain terrain, but perhaps never has a lone tank played such an important part. D-23 carried out firing missions for the point company during the first day's advance and assisted in evacuation of wounded. That night the machine was employed defensively and credited with knocking out two enemy machine guns and an AT gun.

Two CCF roadblocks were destroyed by D-23 next morning before the engine died. The crew changed batteries under enemy fire, then disposed of a third roadblock. When the tank ran low on fuel, two crew members got out on foot and recovered 15 gallons of gas from abandoned vehicles. D-23 "bellied" while attacking a fourth roadblock, and the crew worked all night to free it. By noon the men were so exhausted from fumes, hunger, and lack of sleep that the loader had to be relieved by an infantryman. But three more roadblocks were knocked out before the saga of D-23 came to an end, with the crew reporting "no further incident" after leading the column into Hagaru.

☛ ON 6 DECEMBER, as the 1st Mar Div moved out from Hagaru toward Koto-ri, tanks supported the point company of the 7th Marines. Tanks were also the last elements of the division to leave Hagaru with the 5th Marines. The 90mm guns were kept busy with firing missions in cooperation with the infantry, and the tank machine guns aided in several firefights.

Maintenance problems, it is hardly necessary to add, were of critical importance as the column departed Koto-ri on frozen roads in bitterly cold weather. When a crew got in and out of a tank several times, the men's breathing caused a film of ice to form on the interior. Frost dimmed the periscopes and vapor resulted in frozen fuel pumps and fuel cut-off valves. These were only a few of

the difficulties overcome by maintenance men often working with bare hands under enemy fire. Yet only one tank was lost all the way to Koto-ri—a machine that burned after a leaking radiator led to an overheated engine.

The consequences would have been disastrous, of course, if a tank had broken down and blocked the road for vehicles filled with wounded. As a precaution, the tanks and heavy vehicles were grouped in the column so that power would be available to work a cripple off the road. This measure paid off near Chinhung-ni when the brakes locked on the ninth tank from the rear. It was pushed into the ditch by the two following tanks, but the first one also developed a brake lock just as the Chinese attacked the last machine of all. A savage firefight began after the tankmen scrambled out to form a defensive line. During this action the drivers managed to save the two leading tanks after releasing the locked brake. But the remaining seven had to be left behind for destruction by friendly air strikes.

Later that day another tank was pushed off a cliff, due to mechanical failure. But the 1st Tank Bn had the satisfaction that not a single machine had been destroyed by enemy action during the entire Chosin Reservoir operation.

☛ ONLY A UNIT HISTORY could take the story of Marine armor from the reservoir through operations Killer and Ripper, the CCF counteroffensives, and the other fights of 1951 and 1952. Most of these later chapters would be repetitive, of course, since the 1st Tank Bn came up against few problems that had not been encountered during the first five months in Korea.

In all American military history previous to 1950, tankmen had never contended with such fierce extremes of temperature in such a short period—from the 105-degree heat of the Pusan Perimeter in August to the 30-below-zero cold of the Chosin Reservoir in November! Climate and terrain, in fact, gave the 1st Tank Bn a good deal more trouble than the enemy.

As for combat, the results demonstrated the superiority of the M-26 over the "caviar can." This outcome owed as much to Marine training and tactics as mechanical excellence of American tanks. Even after allowances are made for the enemy having less armor and lacking air power, never once did a Marine tank lose to a T-34 in equal combat. And never once did enemy AT guns or mines put one of our machines permanently out of business during the first five months of Marine operations in Korea.

It took North Korean weather to accomplish what North Korean tanks were unable to do, and the only serious Marine losses came from ice rather than fire.

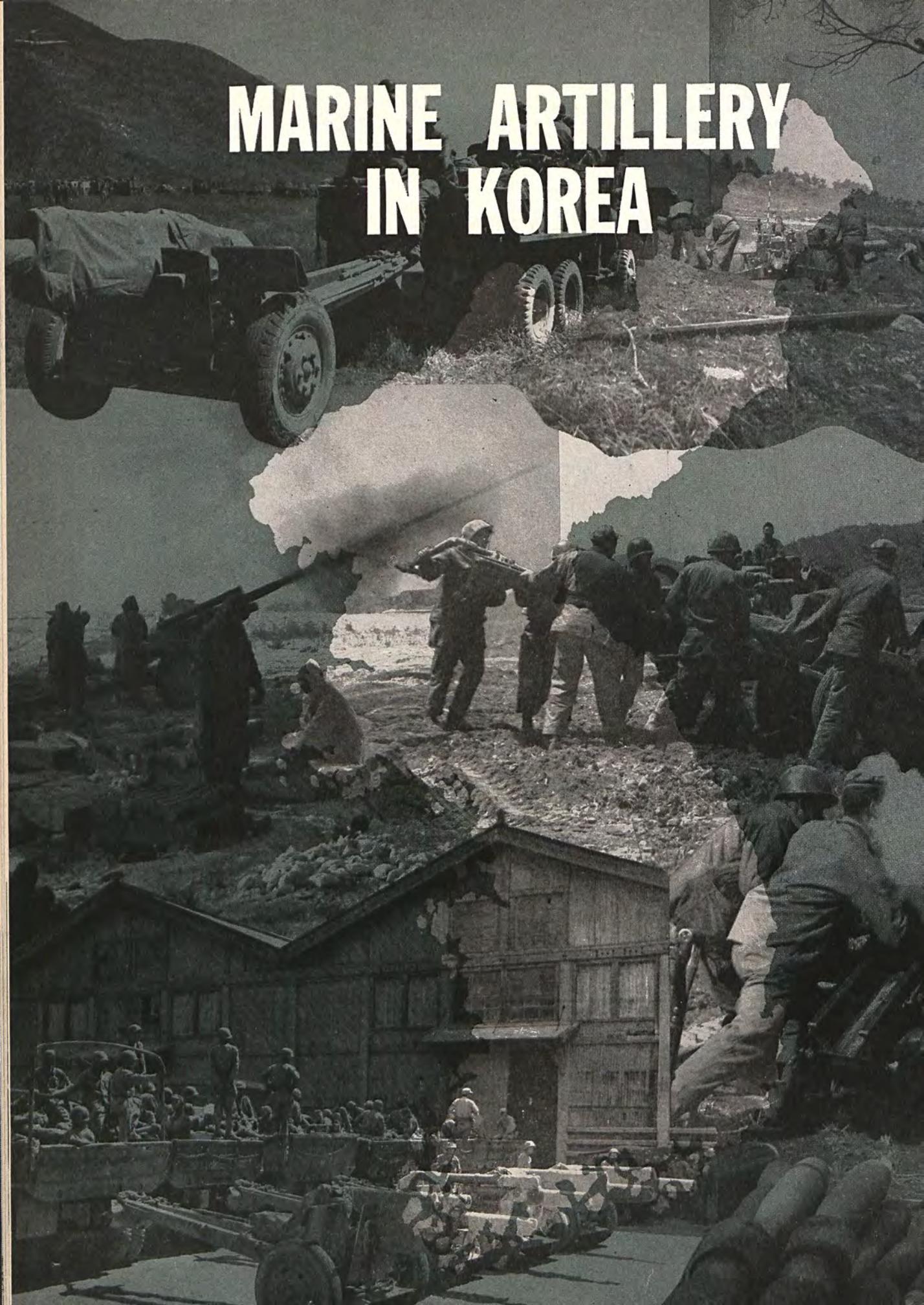
# MARINE ARTILLERY IN KOREA

*By Kenneth W. Condit*

Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps



# MARINE ARTILLERY IN KOREA



THE KOREAN WAR HAS PROVED AGAIN THE TRUTH OF Napoleon's remark that "it is by fire . . . that battles are won . . . It is with artillery that war is made." Confronted by an enemy who relies upon "human sea" assaults, the UN forces have had to depend on superior firepower to overcome the enemy's superiority in numbers. Artillerymen of the 11th Marines have done their share to stop the mass attacks of the Communists. And the fire of their howitzers has proved invaluable in blasting enemy caves and bunkers. Operating under a great variety of conditions, the Marine artillerymen carried out an extremely difficult amphibious operation at Inchon; they operated in the mountains of northeast Korea in the dead of winter; and they participated in large-scale land warfare as part of Eighth Army.

For the 11th Marines the Korean war began on 2 July 1950, the date the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade was alerted for Korea. The artillery battalion was in training at Camp Pendleton, and though it was organized into three four-gun batteries under peace-time tables of organization, it was at a high peak of combat readiness. On 13 July the battalion sailed with the brigade for the Far East. Arriving in Korea on 2 August, it was soon engaged in the desperate fighting to hold the perimeter around the port of Pusan.

While this fighting was still in progress, Gen MacArthur was preparing his counteroffensive. As early as 4 July, the UN commander had begun to prepare an amphibious operation to seize Inchon and Seoul and on 22 July the 1st Mar Div learned it was to spearhead the Inchon landing. D-day was set for 15 September, only fifty-four days away.

On the 25th, the 11th Marines was far from ready for combat. In addition to Headquarters and Service Batteries at peace-time strength, there was only one firing battalion, the 1st, on duty with the brigade in Korea. The regimental commander got a good start on the build-up to war strength when elements of the 10th Marines were redesignated as units of his command. Two 105mm howitzer battalions, 1/10 and 2/10, became 2/11 and 3/11; while 3/10, a 155mm howitzer outfit, became 4/11. These units arrived at Camp Pendleton on 5 August.

The next ten days were filled with feverish activity. Equipment was drawn and loaded aboard ship, and personnel from reserve units joined the regiment to bring it up to full war strength. Very little training was accomplished because all hands were busy mounting out. The 2d and 4th Bns, which were scheduled to leave for the Far East on 15 August, did not fire a single round; while the 3d Bn, which left two weeks later, did only a limited amount of firing. None of the units received its equip-

**By Kenneth W. Condit**

In cooperation with the Historical Branch, G-3, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, the GAZETTE herewith presents another in a series of official accounts dealing with Marine operations in Korea. Prepared by writers and researchers of the Historical Branch, these articles are based on available records and reports from units in Korea. Also to be treated in this series:

1st Medical Bn in Korea

Logistics in Korea

Publication is scheduled for consecutive monthly issues.

Admittedly it is too soon to write a definitive history of Marine fighting in Korea. Not only are enemy sources lacking, but even Marine and Army records are still incomplete. Articles of the length to be used in the GAZETTE, moreover, do not allow space for more than an outline of operations which will ultimately be given the detailed treatment of a monograph.

But timeliness is also an end to be sought, and these preliminary narratives are based on Marine and Army reports received up to this time. These articles are presented in the hope that GAZETTE readers will feel free to add to the incomplete record. This is an invitation, therefore, for you to supplement the existing record. Send your comments and criticisms, as well as any other information you can make available, to the Historical Branch, G-3, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, Washington 25, D. C.

ment in time to calibrate guns and radios. In some instances, the gear was not issued to the batteries until after they reached Japan.

Lack of training was a serious problem, particularly in the 3d and 4th Battalions where the urgency of build-up demanded the assignment of many officers and men who were not qualified artillerymen. But all hands were eager and quick to learn, and key officers and NCOs quickly whipped their outfits into shape once they got in combat. This was done so successfully that not a single round fell short on friendly troops.

The 11th Marines, less the 3d Battalion, departed on schedule and landed at Kobe, Japan, on 29 August. A few days later the regimental commander and his staff were briefed on the division plan. The landing was to be carried out in two stages. At dawn 3/5 was to land on Wolmi island just offshore from the port. Then on the afternoon tide the main force would land on the mainland. At this time the artillery was to go ashore on Wolmi to support the advance inland. To provide additional general support, the Army 96th FA Bn, a 155mm howitzer outfit, was to be attached.

On the basis of this information, the artillery plan was drawn up. Only five days remained to complete the work before the troops embarked for Inchon. To add to the difficulties, suitable maps of the landing area were almost impossible to obtain, the regimental and division staffs were too widely separated for proper liaison, and the Navy tractor area plan did not arrive until the day of departure. Although some aerial photographs of Wolmi were available, it was impossible to tell whether there were sufficient position areas for three battalions

of artillery on the island.

On 9 September the 11th Marines departed for Inchon in nine LSTs and the AKA *USS Washburn*. Six LSTs and the AKA lifted the main body of the regiment from Japan, while the three remaining LSTs carried the 1st Bn from Pusan. Arriving off Inchon on 15 September, the ships moved to the designated tractor area and prepared to launch DUKWs loaded with troops and equipment. Meanwhile, a reconnaissance party landed on Wolmi with assault troops of 3/5.

Preparations to land the regiment in DUKWs were interrupted by an order from the LST flotilla commander to beach the ships. Before this could be done, new instructions were received reverting to the original plan, but by this time the LSTs were out of position, so an orderly ship-to-shore movement was impossible. Forming in ragged columns, the DUKWs made their way to shore as best they could.

By 1845 THE firing batteries of the 1st and 2d Bns began crossing the beach, and by 2145 they were in position ready to fire. Lack of space prevented the 4th Bn from landing until the next day when it went ashore on the mainland. Heavy smoke over the city and lack of targets limited fires to a few rounds during the first night.

Very little opposition was offered by the enemy to the landing, and infantry troops moved rapidly inland. By the 21st they had advanced about fifteen miles and were on the outskirts of Seoul. To support the advance, 1/11 fired in direct support of the 5th Marines, and 2/11 in direct support of the 1st Marines. General support for the 5th Marines was provided by 4/11, while the 96th FA Bn performed the same mission for the 1st Marines. Artillery units had to displace frequently to keep within range to deliver supporting fires. During these five days, 1/11 displayed six times, 2/11 five times, and 4/11 three times. The battalions moved forward a battery at a time so that there would be no interruption of fire support.

The frequent displacements were not the only problem confronting the 11th Marines. The infantry scheme of maneuver created a wide dispersal of units by calling for a two-pronged advance on Seoul. The 5th Marines, advancing north and then swinging around to approach



The battalions moved forward a battery at a time

the city from the northwest, was separated from the 1st Marines, pushing directly towards the city on the Inchon-Seoul highway, by as much as eight miles. To assure proper control during this movement, 1/11 was attached to the 5th Marines.

Complicating the control problem, communications difficulties plagued the artillery regiment throughout the operation. Untrained communicators and worn out or improperly tuned equipment were largely responsible. For the first five days, control of operations was actually in the hands of the battalion commanders. But by the 19th communications problems had been licked sufficiently so that regiment could exercise effective control. At this time 1/11 was detached from the 5th Marines.

During the advance on Seoul, the enemy had offered relatively little opposition. But all this changed when the Marines attacked the capital city and its industrial suburb, Yondong-po. The North Koreans put up a fanatical resistance to the 5th Marines on the hills to the northwest and in the city itself, where houses had been turned into fortresses and innumerable blockades had been thrown across the streets. The 5th Marines received excellent support from 1/11 and 4/11 in their attack on the hills west of the city. But when the infantry entered the city streets, artillery was of limited value. There were relatively few good artillery targets. To destroy a house merely made it a better defensive position because the enemy could hide in the rubble; and tanks, with their pinpoint fire, were more effective for destroying road blocks.

Artillery came into its own in delivering defensive fire

and on two occasions played a major role in breaking North Korean counterattacks. The first attack struck on the night of 20 September and was immediately taken under fire by 2/11. The accuracy of the maps of Seoul and the information on the location of the enemy made it possible for 4/11 to fire unobserved missions with excellent effect.

This performance was repeated on the 26th when 3/11 was counterattacked. Again 2/11 poured fire into the attacking North Koreans. This time both medium battalions, 4/11 and the 96th FA, delivered highly accurate unobserved fire.

On the same day, elements of Eighth Army, which had broken out of the Pusan perimeter, linked up with X Corps troops at Suwon. Seoul fell on the 27th, and by October Eighth Army took over from X Corps. But there was to be no respite for the Marines of the 1st Marine Div. Plans were already being made for further operations.

To pursue the advantage over a disorganized enemy, Gen MacArthur ordered Eighth Army to attack directly north towards Pyongyang, the enemy capital, while X Corps made an amphibious landing at Wonsan on the east coast. Before this assault landing could be carried out, rapidly advancing ROK troops occupied the city. On 26 October the 1st Marine Division landed unopposed at Wonsan and prepared to push on to the Manchurian border.

The large area assigned to the division, with the resulting dispersal of forces, compelled the division commander to attach artillery battalions to infantry RCTs. The 1st

Bn was attached to Regimental Combat Team-5, the 2d to RCT-1, and the 3d to RCT-7. As a result, it was never possible for regiment to exercise effective centralized control of the artillery fired in support of the division.

The Marines had hardly landed at Wonsan when the intervention of the Chinese Communists produced a brand new war. Only seven days after landing, 3/11 with RCT-7 went into action against the new enemy. Ordered forward to relieve a ROK regiment on the road to the Chosin reservoir, the RCT was attacked by a Chinese division in the Sudong gorge. For four days the RCT was heavily engaged. Throughout the engagement 3/11 delivered excellent offensive and defensive supporting fires. The most spectacular mission came on the night of 6 November when the Chinese reserve regiment was caught moving into frontline positions and mauled so badly it had to withdraw.

Problems encountered in this engagement were typical of those confronting artillerymen throughout the operation. In the mountainous terrain good position areas were far and few between, and even though artillery was granted priority, it was often hard to find enough level ground to emplace a battery, much less a battalion.

Artillery operations were restricted even more by the necessity to operate within the infantry perimeter. Operating with regimental-size or smaller combat teams in enemy-infested territory, this was the only way to provide security for the artillery units. But from within the perimeter of an infantry regiment, many targets were at very short ranges. To provide 360-degree coverage, it was necessary to lay the batteries on different azimuths.

In some cases, the howitzers could not be brought to bear without shifting trails. Under these conditions, it was very difficult to mass fires. Short ranges and high hills combined to require a great deal of high angle fire. Gen Almond, the X Corps commander, who visited 3/11 in position for high angle fire at Sudong, thought the battalion looked like an AAA outfit.

Following the defeat of the Chinese division at Sudong, the Marines pushed on towards the Chosin reservoir. Enemy opposition was negligible, although there were many signs of the presence of hostile forces. By the middle of the month, the

King Battery doing some night work



Marines were confronted by a new enemy, the cold. Temperatures went down below the zero mark, presenting artillerymen with a whole new set of problems. Truck and bulldozer engines had to be turned over every half hour during the night to prevent them from freezing. The ground was frozen so hard that it was impossible to dig in the trails of the howitzers, and it took several minutes for the howitzer tubes to return to battery after firing.

In spite of the cold, the advance continued, and by 27 November RCTs-5 and 7 had reached Yudam-ni on the western side of the reservoir. With the exception of H Battery still in Hagaru, the attached artillery elements were emplaced at Yudam-ni to support their RCTs. Under new orders from Gen MacArthur calling for participation in an envelopment movement with Eighth Army, both RCT-5 and RCT-7 were ready to attack west. To give general support to the attack, 4/11 was moved up to Yudam-ni.

RCT-1, relieved by Army units of security missions to the south, was now deployed at selected strongpoints along the MSR to the coast. Its artillery elements were distributed over a wide area. D Battery was at Hagaru in support of the 3d Bn; E Battery supported the 2d Bn at Koto-ri; and F Battery was helping the 1st Bn to hold Chinhung-ni.

But the great "end of the war" offensive never got rolling. On the 25th the Chinese struck Eighth Army, and two days later they attacked X Corps. The 1st Mar Div bore the brunt of the attack, and by the morning of 28 November all the Marine perimeters were isolated. The two most advanced, Yudam-ni and Hagaru, were under heavy attack by eight enemy divisions.

**"Fire for effect!"**



Typical of these fights was the defense of Yudam-ni. Here the three artillery battalions—1/11, 3/11, and 4/11—were in position to support the attack to the west when the enemy struck. It was obvious that the howitzers should be redeployed to provide the best coverage all around the perimeter. But before this could be done, it was necessary to establish some form of centralized control. Regimental headquarters was to have moved forward to Yudam-ni but was caught at Hagaru by the Chinese attack. To remedy the deficiency, an artillery group was formed under the command of the senior battalion commander, LtCol Harvey Feehan of 1/11. Under his direction, the batteries were spotted around on different azimuths to cover all avenues of approach.

ARTILLERY MADE EVERY effort to meet all requests for fire missions but was handicapped by ammunition shortages. With the MSR cut, airdrop was the only means of resupply. But only about 1200 rounds of 105mm ammunition were dropped and of these only about 600 were usable. No effort was made to drop 155mm ammunition, as an equivalent weight of 105mm was more valuable in minimum range missions against enemy attacking infantry frontlines. To conserve the limited amount of the heavier caliber ammunition, 4/11 limited its fires to counterbattery and heavy troop concentrations. This restriction was justified by the enemy's limited use of artillery.

Further to handicap the artillery units in their delivery of fires, they were required to provide infantry replacements. On the 28th, artillery units furnished seven officers and 314 men. The next day they were called upon to supply an additional four officers and 164 men. As a

result, it was not always possible to man all the howitzers. In 4/11, for instance, one platoon (two howitzers) in each battery had to be put out of action, but all the weapons were laid, and the crews shifted from one piece to another depending upon the direction of the targets.

After two days of heavy fighting, the Marines at Yudam-ni were ordered to withdraw to Hagaru. This was to be the first step in a general withdrawal of the whole division to the coast. As a preliminary step, the two RCTs redeployed into a valley running south of the town and astride the road to Hagaru. Artillery and serv-



At Hagaru, the 105s were literally "firing out of a barrel"

ward, reaching the G Battery position by 0600. As dawn approached the enemy began a heavy mortar barrage in preparation for an assault on the artillery position. Both batteries went into position to bring direct fire to bear and opened up at ranges within 500 yards. So effective was the fire that the assault never materialized, and after about two hours the enemy withdrew. The 1st Bn had a similar experience when the Chinese, using automatic weapons and grenades, attacked A and C Batteries. The Marines fought back with small arms and 105mm howitzers. C Battery fired about 100 rounds of direct fire into the enemy, breaking up the attack.

With the coming of daylight, the artillery units rejoined the column and proceeded to Koto-ri without further incident. Using these same tactics, the 11th Marines continued to support the withdrawal of the 1st Marine Division from Koto-ri to the sea. By 15 December, the Marines had completed outloading and had sailed for South Korea. Following a period of reorganizing and training and a brief anti-guerrilla campaign, the 1st Marine Division was committed to the Eighth Army front.

The Marines were to participate in Operation Killer, a limited-objective offensive designed to keep the pressure on the enemy, inflicting maximum casualties and preventing him from mounting a counteroffensive. Jumping off on 21 February, the Marines moved methodically ahead and had achieved their objectives by 4 March. Operation Killer was so successful that it was continued at once under the name of Operation Ripper.

☛ FOR ARTILLERYMEN these operations were war "by the book." The 11th Marines' headquarters was able to control the artillery supporting the division, to mass fires, and to deliver TOT (time on target) missions. The 105mm battalions were assigned in direct support of the same regiments they had supported in previous operations. To supplement the general support fires of 4/11, the Army 92d Armored Field Artillery Bn was attached to the 11th Marines until 20 March.

Marine artillerymen were impressed by the good qualities of the self-propelled 155mm howitzers with which this Army battalion was equipped and the aggressive way the "Red Devils" of the 92d used their equipment. Not only

could these weapons move over the ground more rapidly than a towed howitzer of the same caliber, but they could go into and out of action with great speed. In the few instances when it was necessary to shift trails, the self-propelled weapon proved much easier to move. For short periods, the 11th Marines also had batteries of 8-inch howitzers of the Army 17th FA Bn attached. These heavy artillery pieces were powerful and extremely accurate and were used for precision fire against enemy bunkers and artillery positions.

As the Marines moved slowly forward, the enemy conducted delaying actions from successive hill positions. For artillery as well as for infantry, one attack was much like another. Typical of these actions was the attack of the 1st Marines on Hill 166 south of Hoengsong. During the night before the attack, howitzers of 2/11 kept up harassing and interdiction fires to keep the enemy awake and to soften him up. At 0800 an air strike came in and hit the target hill, while the infantry moved up to jump-off positions. When the planes retired, artillery and 4.2-inch mortars fired their concentrations. Infantry and tanks attacked under cover of the artillery and mortar fires. As each howitzer had been individually registered, it was possible to keep the fire on the objective until friendly troops were within 100 yards of the enemy positions. At this point, the artillery lifted to fire on the next ridge, and 81mm mortars began hitting the reverse slope of the objective. Under the cover of these supporting fires, the assault troops had no difficulty in seizing the hill.

This pattern was repeated time and again as the Marines moved methodically ahead. After a month of this sort of fighting, the artillery was confronted with an additional problem by the attachment of the Korean Marine Corps (KMC) regiment to the division. With four infantry regiments and only four battalions of artillery, the balance of arms was upset. The ordinary procedure of providing a 105mm battalion for direct support of each infantry regiment and a 155mm battalion for general support of the whole division could no longer be used. As an expedient the division shifted the direct support battalion along with forward observers and liaison officers from the reserve regiment to the KMC's when they were in the line. But there was a very real danger of getting caught short if it were ever necessary to commit all four infantry regiments.

These fears were realized on 23 April when the Chinese launched a major offensive and broke through the ROK division on the Marines' left. To refuse the exposed flank, the 1st Marines was ordered to occupy blocking positions with two battalions, while the other battalion reinforced the 7th Marines. It was necessary to assign 4/11 to a direct support mission, as no other artillery unit was available. Forward observers and liaison officers were provided partly by Headquarters, 11th Marines and partly by the over-run Army 987th FA Bn, whose surviv-

ors had been attached to the 11th Marines. Although 155mm howitzers are not ordinarily used in direct support, Marines of 4/11 fired these missions with excellent effect. On the night of 23 April they brought fires within fifty yards of friendly troops and helped to break up Chinese attacks. One enemy column of 500 men, advancing through a valley on which the howitzers were registered, suffered an estimated fifty per cent casualties.

All along the front enemy attacks were met by Marine artillery fires. Reinforcing fires came from the Army 213th AFA Bn which was attached to the 11th Marines and from the 92d AFA Bn now a part of corps artillery. There were so many targets that it was impossible to take them all under fire. But the fires which were delivered were extremely effective. According to the testimony of one Chinese prisoner, artillery fire frequently broke up troop concentrations, making it very difficult for the enemy to mass for an attack. During the period of heavy enemy attacks, 22 to 24 April, the 11th Marines had fired 527 missions, consisting of 12,844 105mm rounds and 4,008 155mm rounds. Enemy casualties inflicted by artillery fire were estimated at 5,000.

ALTHOUGH BY 24 APRIL the Marines had beaten off the enemy attacks, still the gap on the left created by the break-through remained. In danger of being outflanked, the Marines were ordered by Eighth Army to withdraw. During the next eight days, the division pulled back to successive defensive positions for a distance of about thirty miles before the Eighth Army was able to stabilize the front. This withdrawal required four successive artillery displacements, carried out by echelon so that the infantry was never without artillery support. By 30 April the 1st Marine Division was deployed along a new defensive line, and the Chinese attacks had been stopped along the line.

Following the collapse of the Chinese April offensive, Eighth Army ordered defensive positions to be prepared in depth with mine fields, wire entanglements, and prepared fields of fire. On 16 May the Chinese returned to the attack, striking this time at the U.S. 2d Infantry Division and at ROK units on the east. Again the enemy achieved a breakthrough, but timely shifting of reserves slowed down the attack. As the main enemy thrust struck the UN forces to the east of the Marine positions, the 11th Marines was free to support the hard-pressed 2d Infantry Division. Heavy concentrations were fired in harassing and interdiction missions, but, as very few specific targets had been assigned, the effect was merely to saturate an area with undetermined results.

By the 20th, the enemy attacks had lost their momentum. An immediate counteroffensive was ordered, and by 15 June, UN forces had advanced some thirty miles. At this point they ran up against the enemy main line of resistance. Both sides dug in, and the war settled down



Sometimes they looked like antiaircraft weapons

to a stalemate, with neither side willing to attempt a major attack. Shortly after, truce negotiations were started.

As the truce delegates were holding their first meetings to discuss a cease-fire agreement, the enemy opened up with his heaviest artillery fires of the war. From that point on, counterbattery fire became a vital mission for Marine artillerymen. Beginning on a modest scale in July, the enemy gradually increased his fires both in volume

and accuracy. At first he followed the Japanese practice of firing single weapons from cave positions, but by the end of the month he was massing battery fires. The 76mm guns with which the enemy began his effort were soon supplemented by 122mm howitzers, captured American 105s, and even by a few 152mm weapons. Infantry positions were the first enemy targets, but he soon began firing on artillery emplacements as well. On 1 November, 2/11 was shelled by 76mm guns and 122mm howitzers. About 120 rounds fell in the battalion area, killing one man, wounding four others, and causing serious damage to the galley, the water trailer, one gun, and most of the battalion motor transport.

☛ IN RESPONSE to the increasing enemy artillery fire, the 11th Marines put into operation a counterbattery plan for the first time since the commitment of the 1st Marine Division to Eighth Army in February. Counterbattery and other fires against enemy artillery were primarily the responsibility of 4/11. In June this battalion had devoted a mere two per cent of its effort to this type of mission. but the next month the figure jumped to fifteen per cent. During the succeeding months, this percentage gradually increased until it reached twenty-two per cent in April 1952.

More than two years have elapsed since the 11th Marines first arrived in Korea. During that time the Marine artillerymen have demonstrated their versatility by performing all types of missions. They have made an amphibious landing, engaged in mountain warfare, and participated in large-scale land operations. The end of the war is still not in sight. In fact, the enemy continues to build up his forces. But whatever happens, the 11th Marines stand ready to meet the challenge. US ☛ MC

---

*Next Month: Logistics in Korea*

Sluggish guns and frozen ground added to the artillerymen's problems



**THEY MAKE MEN WHOLE AGAIN**

**The Medical Battalion  
and Chaplains in Korea**

*By Lynn Montross*

Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps



Reprinted from December 1952 issue of The Marine Corps Gazette

**THEY MAKE MEN WHOLE AGAIN**

**The Medical Battalion  
and Chaplains in Korea**



THE HELICOPTER FLUTTERED DOWN TO KIMPO WITH two badly wounded Marines. One of them breathed with difficulty after receiving a machine gun bullet through the chest, and the other was suffering from the shock of mortar fragments in the abdomen.

Only an hour and a half before, both men had been engaged in the savage fight of the 5th Marines for the northwest approaches to Seoul. They were evacuated from the firing line in an M-26 tank, after being taken through the escape hatch. Corpsmen administered first aid and blood plasma at the battalion station, then prepared the men for further evacuation in a "flying ambulance" holding two litters.

At the clearing station the Marine pilot looked on with concern as the patients were removed from the helicopter to be taken to the emergency operating room. The faces of both were gray and haggard, as seen through the plexiglas hoods of the litters. Their hope of survival seemed slim, and the pilot might have been astonished to learn that the mathematical chances were about 199 to one in favor of each patient coming out alive.

This estimate is based upon statistics of the 1st Medical Battalion during the Inchon-Seoul operation of the 1st Marine Division from 15 September to 7 October 1950. During the three weeks, Companies A, B, and C processed a total of 2,484 surgical patients. Of that number, only nine died after reaching the station, and among them were six deaths following major surgery.

The proportion of patients surviving after evacuation, therefore, reached the figure of 99.43 per cent.

These surgical statistics cover the most critical cases, a majority of which were wounds. During the Inchon-Seoul operation, however, the 1st Med Bn treated a grand total of 5,516 patients for all causes, including ailments ranging from acute appendicitis down to such antilimatic ills as piles, hernia, sprains, and blisters. This total breaks down into the following categories:

2,811, Marine; 78, Navy; 358, Army; 322, ROK and KMC; 1,908, civilian; and 39, POW.

Altogether, the results of the 1st Med Bn in Korea were enough to make Florence Nightingale turn enviously in her grave. When that courageous fighter for surgical reforms arrived at the Crimea in 1855, the death rate was forty-eight per cent among British and French soldiers admitted to the foul holes passing as hospitals. During her first year Miss Nightingale reduced the losses to less than ten per cent, largely as a result of insisting upon decent food and cleanliness.

Four more years were to pass before the Swiss humanitarian Henri Dumont, moved by the sufferings of the

In cooperation with the Historical Branch, G-3, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, the GAZETTE herewith presents another in a series of official accounts dealing with Marine operations in Korea. Prepared by writers and researchers of the Historical Branch, these articles are based on available records and reports from units in Korea. Also to be treated in this series:

#### Marine Supply and Logistics in Korea

Admittedly it is too soon to write a definitive history of Marine fighting in Korea. Not only are enemy sources lacking, but even Marine and Army records are still incomplete. Articles of the length to be used in the GAZETTE, moreover, do not allow space for more than an outline of operations which will ultimately be given the detailed treatment of a monograph.

But timeliness is also an end to be sought, and these preliminary narratives are based on Marine and Army reports received up to this time. These articles are presented in the hope that GAZETTE readers will feel free to add to the incomplete record. This is an invitation, therefore, for you to supplement the existing record. Send your comments and criticisms, as well as any other information you can make available, to the Historical Branch, G-3, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, Washington 25, D. C.

neglected wounded at the battle of Solferino, wrote a book leading to the foundation of the International Red Cross. The principle of adequate care for war's victims, therefore, is less than a century old, having lagged far behind the other military sciences.

Until the Civil War, this country, like less progressive nations, went little further than providing bandages for the wounded and a bullet to bite during the agony of amputations without an anesthetic. It might appear that generals and admirals would have demanded reforms on practical grounds, considering the percentage of men lost to active service by wounds or diseases deemed trivial today. But this frightful wastage was taken for granted until comparatively recent years, and Asiatic armies still rely on the military surgery of past ages while fighting with the weapons of the twentieth century.

No issue finds the democratic nations and totalitarian powers further apart in ideological respects than the value placed on human life. During World War II the Soviet forces accepted as a matter of course a ratio of casualties that would not have been tolerated by a state respecting the rights of the individual. But even in totalitarian Russia the state made every effort to restore the wounded individual to active duty if he could be salvaged by modern medical science. The Korean and Chinese Reds, on the contrary, have not shown much practical solicitude for their casualties, let alone humanitarian concern. As a result, the world's highest ethics of military medical care have been pitted in Korea against the lowest, and it remains to be seen whether the enemy's policy can be justified even on materialistic grounds.

Humanitarian values come first with the American

**By Lynn Montross**

forces, but it is noteworthy that the division hospital of the 1st Med Bn set a record of sending fifty-eight per cent of its Inchon-Seoul casualties back to their units for further duty. And though no comparable statistics are available for the enemy, Red operations in Korea have unquestionably been weakened at times by losses from epidemics as well as military action.

The best and latest American methods were put into effect by the division surgeon, Capt E. R. Hering,<sup>1</sup> and the 1st Med Bn, commanded by Comdr Howard A. Johnson, which reached Inchon with the rest of the 1st Mar Div just before the amphibious landing. Most of the men had received some previous field training, and Co C had seen action with the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade in the Pusan Perimeter. This combat experience included the first experiments in evacuation of casualties by Marine helicopters.

☛ CARE OF THE WOUNDED in a Marine division begins with the complement of two medical officers and forty hospital corpsmen attached to each infantry battalion. Two aid men advance with each platoon to supervise the evacuation of casualties from the firing line. The wounded man then walks or is carried to the battalion aid station by litter bearers, consisting of Marine enlisted personnel. There the two medical officers and the rest of the corpsmen give treatment to put the casualty in condition for further evacuation.

From now on, the division medical battalion is in charge. This unit includes a Headquarters and Service Company in addition to the five letter companies which have the responsibility for casualty care. Three are collecting and clearing companies, one being available for each infantry regiment. The collecting section evacuates casualties from the aid station to the clearing section, which is a highly mobile sixty-bed field hospital with a surgical team for treatment of non-evacuables requiring resuscitation and immediate surgery. The remaining two letter companies are hospital companies, staffed and equipped on a 200-bed basis to provide definitive care and hospitalization within the division area.

At this point it would be an oversight not to mention the twenty-eight Navy chaplains, both regular and reserve officers, attached to major units of the 1st Mar Div at Inchon. Representing the Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish faiths, the chaplains' section has a primary mission "to minister to the spiritual needs of the troops, 'bringing men to God and God to men.'" A secondary mission is "to minister to the sick, the wounded, and the dying," and some of the most daring rescues of wounded

<sup>1</sup>USN or USNR ranks being held by all medical officers and chaplains mentioned in this article, these are omitted as repetitive. Marine ranks are distinguished by the letters USMC.

men on the firing line have been credited to chaplains. More than one Marine's life has been saved because the "padre" risked his own to give first aid, and it is the duty of these officers to conduct burial services and write letters of consolation to the next-of-kin of deceased personnel.

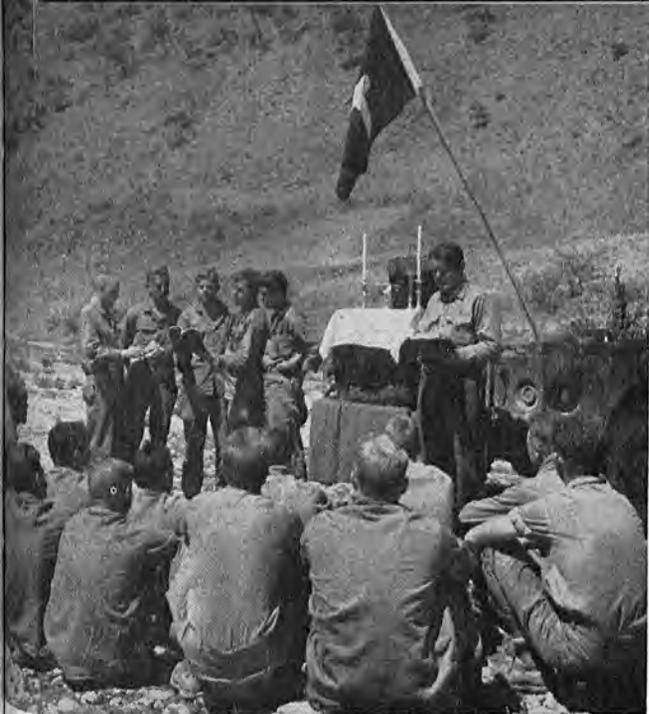
The amphibious mission of a Marine division adds the necessity for medical self-sufficiency, since the evacuation of casualties to rear areas may be interrupted during a ship-to-shore attack. A solution for this problem was found at Inchon, where a revolutionary new technique was initiated to co-ordinate medical care with the complex tactics of a great amphibious operation.

Military surgeons use the term "golden period" in reference to the few hours after a man has been wounded in a vital part of the body. Resuscitation and definitive care can still save his life, but delay may be fatal. Despite this danger, definitive care often had to wait in past amphibious operations until the casualty could be evacuated to a hospital ship after temporary treatment on the beach.

Navy medical officers tried a bold new technique on D-day at Inchon when four surgical teams, each made up of three doctors and ten corpsmen, hit the beaches in LSTs shortly after the landing of the assault troops. Two other teams waited offshore under enemy fire in improvised operating rooms aboard LSTs loaded with explosives and napalm. Practically all the Marines wounded in the Inchon assault were treated on the beaches by one of the four advance surgical teams. Then, if further care was indicated, the casualties were sent aboard the LSTs for surgery and hospitalization or evacuation to hospitals in Japan.

☛ SOMEWHAT SIMILAR surgical teams had been used in the South Pacific landings and the Normandy operation of World War II. But Inchon is distinguished as the first amphibious assault where a carefully plotted medical technique was integrated with military tactics. The surgical teams had been drilled like men on a football squad, and on the night of D-day Team No. 2 received ninety-five wounded Marines, many requiring chest or abdominal surgery, without the loss of a single case. A specialist in plastic surgery was available for facial wounds requiring surgery which would leave no unsightly scars.

Such a spectacular success was achieved by the teams at Inchon that they were recalled to Japan afterwards to act as preceptors to other teams in process of organization. Within a year the number of these teams had grown to twenty-two on standby duty in the Far East. When not needed for a special military operation, they were integrated into the staffs of hospitals or hospital



"Bringing men to God and God to men"

ships to keep in constant training for their team jobs by working with the wounded.

A tremendous task awaited the 1st Med Bn at Inchon. On the morning of D plus one, Cos A and B put equipment ashore for a division hospital. A school building at Inchon was selected as the location, and shortly after noon on D plus two the hospital was prepared to receive casualties.

By D plus four the line of evacuation had grown so long that a clearing station was set up at Kimpo Airfield by Cos C and D to serve the rapidly advancing 5th Marines as that regiment prepared to cross the river Han and assault Seoul. Although Kimpo had been captured from the enemy only the day before, the medical officers arrived with previously sterilized instruments and were prepared to operate on casualties only sixty-five minutes after their trucks reached the new location.

The 1,900 casualties given life-saving aid at Kimpo during the first week included not only Marines but U. S. Army personnel and Koreans of all political persuasions, civilians as well as soldiers.

The 1st Marines, pushing ahead toward Seoul on a route parallel to that of the other regiment, was supported by a provisional platoon of medical officers and corpsmen who set up a mobile clearing point for casualties to be evacuated to Kimpo. The 7th Marines did not land until D plus seven, and Co D of the 1st Med Bn was attached to that regiment when it attacked north of Seoul.

The securing of the city led to a sharp drop in the casualties treated at Kimpo and Inchon. And on 28 September Co B was displaced from Kimpo to install a forward hospital at Seoul which became the principal clear-

ing station during the last nine days of the operation.

From start to finish, the need for helicopter evacuation was reduced to a minimum by the comparatively good roads of the Inchon-Seoul area. Ambulances were the main reliance of medical officers who never compromised with their ideal of resuscitation and definitive care without delay for critical cases.

Stateside blood donors would have been gratified to know that such care, as Capt Hering defined it, often "meant whole blood in adequate amounts, administered in time to obviate prolonged shock; in time to bring the serious [casualties] back into condition so that immediate surgery, if indicated, could be performed at the most opportune time." This standard of timeliness has been the principal factor in establishing an overall mortality rate among American casualties wounded in action of twenty-three per one thousand in Korea as compared to an incidence of forty-five per thousand in World War II.

The chaplains earned a share of the credit for prompt evacuation of the wounded during the three weeks of Inchon-Seoul. Three of the twenty-eight chaplains were themselves wounded, giving their group a ratio of casualties comparing with that of combat troops.

Eleven other chaplains of the 1st Mar Div have won the Purple Heart in subsequent operations. Among the fifty-one additional honors of the chaplains' section in two years of Marine operations are twenty-two Bronze Stars, two Silver Stars, two Legion of Merit awards, and twenty-five letters of commendation.

☛ ON 7 OCTOBER the 1st Mar Div was relieved by Eighth Army elements in preparation for a new amphibious landing at Wonsan on the east coast. The Marines and other X Corps units were then to strike across the peninsula and join forces with the Eighth Army, advancing up the west coast, to complete the defeat of the Korean Reds. The collapse of enemy resistance was so sudden, however, that this plan had to be amended. As it proved, the 1st Mar Div made an unopposed landing at Wonsan on the 25th, and its units were soon widely dispersed in northeast Korea on a variety of patrolling and blocking missions.

This meant that the 1st Med Bn must also cover a great deal of ground, since the elements of the division were separated early in November by 118 miles from north to south. The division hospital was first established by Cos A and B at Wonsan immediately after the landing. Then as the 7th Marines began an advance to the Chosin Reservoir, the need for a second division hospital in the Hamhung-Hungnam area was filled by Co A. It was a timely move, for on 3 November the 7th Marines had the first large-scale fight of American troops with the Chinese Communist invaders who had infiltrated through

the mountains to the aid of the beaten Korean Reds. The regiment cut a CCF division to pieces in a four-day battle, but this result was not accomplished without losses. The first wounded Marine reached the hospital at Hungnam at 1500 on 4 November, and before midnight 150 had been received.

Wounded CCF prisoners were among the total of 386 casualties given care at Hungnam from 4 to 9 November after being evacuated by motor and rail. A clearing station had been set up at Hamhung by Cos C and E, attached to the 5th and 7th Marines respectively, and heated railway cars were used for evacuation over the Korean narrow-gauge line running from Hungnam to Chinhung-ni at the foot of the mountains. Critical casualties were flown from Hamhung to the hospital ship *USS Consolation* at Wonsan or to base hospitals in Japan.

OF THE 386 CASUALTIES received at the Hungnam hospital from 4 to 9 November, only one died of wounds after admission. The next two and a half weeks brought a sudden drop in 1st Mar Div casualties as an ominous lull fell over the front. During this period the major units of the division advanced to the Hagaru area, at the foot of the Chosin Reservoir, while detachments provided security at Koto-ri and Chinhung-ni along the MSR to Hamhung. As the center of gravity of the division shifted, the 1st Med Bn moved its command post and the remainder of its personnel from Wonsan to Hungnam, followed by the *USS Consolation*. There the division hospital had been enlarged to 400 beds, and a new annex was set up at Hamhung with 100 to 150 more.

The line of evacuation became overlong, however, as the 5th and 7th Marines were ordered to advance from Hagaru to Yudam-ni in preparation for a combined offensive of X Corps in the east and Eighth Army in the west. Medical officers felt the need of a hospital-type facility at Hagaru in addition to the clearing stations operated by Co D at Koto-ri and Chinhung-ni. Plans were made, therefore, for Cos C and E to combine their resources at Hagaru and establish a medical supply dump as well as forward hospital. Additional surgical teams were to be flown to Hagaru by Cos A and B from the division hospital.

Execution of these plans had just begun when the great CCF counteroffensive exploded on 25 November. The enemy hurled back the Eighth Army in the west, and on the night of the 27th it was the turn of X Corps as eight Chinese divisions fell upon the 1st Mar Div. The 5th and 7th Marines were isolated at Yudam-ni in sub-zero weather, with the main supply route cut behind them as far south as the Koto-ri area. The main CCF blow fell on the 28th, when the casualties of the Marines amounted to 939—the largest total for one day ever recorded by the 1st Mar Div in Korea.

Of this number, 539 had been wounded, and 161 killed or died of wounds. The 239 non-battle casualties were nearly all frostbite cases, some of them so severe that amputation was indicated. Enemy roadblocks prevented ambulances from using the fourteen-mile mountain trail leading to Hagaru from Yudam-ni. Temperatures ranging from ten to twenty below zero added to the difficulties of the inadequate number of medical officers and corpsmen at Yudam-ni.

LtComdr John H. Craven, chaplain of the 7th Marines and his colleagues went sleepless for three nights while assisting the medical personnel. A few of the most serious casualties were evacuated by helicopter, but the great majority had to wait for transportation in vehicles.

Other Marine positions along the MSR were also attacked. Fox Co of the 7th Marines, guarding a critical mountain pass halfway between Hagaru and Yudam-ni, fought for survival against Chinese in estimated regimental strength. This position was surrounded by the enemy, so that corpsmen could only give first aid to casualties and make them as comfortable as possible.

The perimeters at Hagaru, Koto-ri, and Chinhung-ni held by the 3d, 2d, and 1st Bns respectively of the 1st Marines, were not neglected by the enemy. But it was Hagaru that had the hardest fight of all, for the CCF made tremendous effort to take this key position. Marine engineers, truck drivers, and clerks from the division command post were pressed into service as infantrymen and several penetrations by screaming Chinese threatened to overrun the medical tents.

Repeated attempts were made by Marine tank and infantry patrols to clear the MSR. All were turned back by overwhelming enemy numbers. Even a task force composed of three tank-supported infantry companies met with disaster on the 29th while escorting supplies and reinforcements from Koto-ri to Hagaru. The tanks and infantry in the lead got through with heavy losses, and the elements in the rear fought their way back to Koto-ri. But the service troops and trucks in the middle of the column were compelled to surrender after exhausting their ammunition in an all-night fight.

This outcome convinced the Marine command of the necessity of remaining on the defensive until the separated groups could fight their way out as a division. During the next two days, therefore, the 1st Mar Div presented to the enemy five bristling perimeters having no contact with one another save by air.

Seldom in U. S. military history has a group of medical officers faced a heavier responsibility or a greater opportunity for service than the situation confronting Capt Hering and the heads of the 1st Med Bn. All were confident as to the ability of the 1st Mar Div to cut its way through eight CCF divisions to the seacoast. Be-

there was an "if" in the equation—the Marines could come out fighting *if* their hundreds of casualties were evacuated.

This was the problem of the medical officers. They had anticipated the possibility of an emergency in their advance planning, but enemy action stopped the convoy of medical supplies sent to Hagaru. These supplies reached Koto-ri, however, where they proved useful at a later stage of the breakout. For the time being, the 1st Med Bn had to take to the air. Helicopter evacuation was limited by the lack of enough machines to meet a fraction of the demands. It was the L-5, an Army observation plane comparable to the OY, that became the workhorse of the battalion



At Hagaru, transports flew out almost three thousand casualties in three days

as more surgical teams were flown to Hagaru and serious casualties evacuated on the return trip.

Such efforts were on too small a scale to be more than a partial solution, since it was estimated that total Marine casualties amounted to nearly 2,000 by 30 November. The number was increased by a thousand, moreover, when three battalions of the 7th Infantry Division were cut off east of the reservoir and badly mauled. LtCol Olin D. Beall, USMC, led Marine volunteers who crossed the ice of the reservoir in jeeps and sleds to rescue wounded or frostbitten soldiers. These casualties were taken into the crowded hospital tents at Hagaru as charges of the 1st Med Bn.

Medical officers now recognized that their only hope for a solution of the evacuation problem lay in the use of the C-47 strip at Hagaru, commenced on 18 November by Marine engineers working day and night. Soil frozen as hard as concrete slowed up the dozers and scrapers, and drivers silhouetted by floodlights were a target for enemy snipers. It was a remarkable feat under the circumstances to have completed 2,900 feet in twelve days. The "minimum" prescribed by engineering manuals was 6,000 feet, but so pressing was the need that the half-finished strip had its test on 1 December after having been in the hands of the enemy two nights before.

Anxious eyes were fixed on the first Air Force C-47 as its wheels touched the frozen runway, and it seemed a miracle when the pilot made a safe, even if bumpy,

landing. Better yet, he compounded the miracle by taking off successfully with twenty-four wounded Marines.

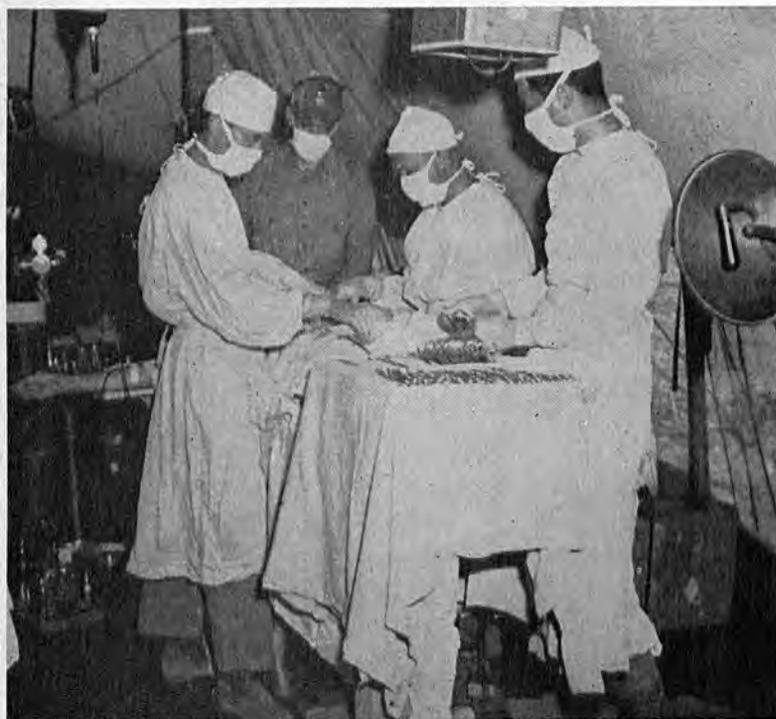
Thus was launched one of the most prodigious air evacuations of casualties in military history. Capt Hering had charge of the medical situation at Hagaru, and the airstrip boiled with activity as C-47s landed and took off that afternoon. About 450 casualties were evacuated before dusk to the division hospital at Hungnam, the *USS Consolation*, or various hospitals in Japan. This number was doubled the next day, and 929 wounded or frostbitten soldiers of the 7th Infantry Division were evacuated by air on 3 December.

☛ DURING THESE THREE days a great effort was made to clear the hospital tents at Hagaru before the 5th and 7th Marines arrived from Yudam-ni. Their breakout had been preceded by a surprise maneuver on the night of 1 December when the 1st Bn of the 7th Marines took an "impossible" route across the mountain tops to effect the relief of Fox Co and secure the critical pass near Sinhung-ni. After a march of frightful hardships over a trackless waste of snowdrifts and boulders, the column accomplished both of its missions the next day while bringing out its own dead and wounded.

Five days and nights of battling the Chinese had left Fox Co with eighty-nine wounded, including six of the seven officers. These casualties had received only a minimum of care in a hilltop perimeter surrounded by



Never before have a man's chances been so good



Battiefeld surgeons take advantage of the "golden period"

the enemy. They were given further treatment by the doctors and corpsmen of the 1st Bn, assisted by Chaplain Craven.

Meanwhile the main body of the two regiments had begun the move from Yudam-ni to Hagaru that morning. It had been possible up to this time to evacuate only 156 of the most critical casualties from Yudam-ni by helicopter or observation planes. The hundreds of remaining

casualties were taken out in the vehicles, the most serious cases being wrapped in their sleeping bags and secured by ropes. Every Marine walked who was able to hobble along and carry a rifle, including men with light wounds.

From the start the column had to fight its way through defended roadblocks, so that new casualties were incurred hourly. Sub-zero weather accounted for scores of them. Men struggled up the mountainsides to drive back the Chinese, then had their feet frozen before they could find an opportunity to change socks wet with perspiration.<sup>2</sup> Some of the victims, pinned down for long periods by CCF fire, were found with their feet encased in a shell of ice.

Capt Hering had hoped to remove the most critical casualties by air as the column proceeded. This project had to be abandoned, however, after the loss of two helicopters which crashed in narrow mountain passes. Corpsmen gave the wounded first aid, and litter-bearers brought them off the hillsides to the column. Only a few heated ambulances were available for resuscitation by means of serum albumen, followed by injections of antibiotics. The wounded were then placed in sleeping bags and lashed to the trucks.

EVERY INCH OF space on vehicles was occupied after the casualties of 1/7 and Fox Co brought the total up to 2,400. The head of the column wound its way into Hagaru on the afternoon of 3 December and the rear arrived the next morning. Even the Marines who had escaped bullets and frostbite might have been considered casualties of exhaustion, sleepless nights, and digestive ills resulting from a diet of frozen "C" rations. But all men who could pull a trigger were needed, and Capt Hering was guided by a Spartan example when sorting out frostbite cases for evacuation by air. This precept was set by LtComdr Chester N. Lessenden, regimental surgeon of the 5th Marines, who refused to be evacuated and continued at his duties after both feet were painfully frozen. Capt Hering passed personally on all controversial cases, and he approved for evacuation only those in worse shape than Lessenden. Apparently this was not too severe a test, for the surgeon of the 5th Marines suffered no permanent injury.

Marine morale was so high at Hagaru that some of the men selected for evacuation were reluctant. The warming and feeding of thousands of casualties was a tremendous task for overworked medical officers and corpsmen assisted by chaplains. Every hour counted as this group set itself the goal of evacuating all helpless casualties, so that the division could begin the next stage of

<sup>2</sup>These casualties led to the adoption of the thermal boots which kept the feet of the 1st Mar Div warm and dry throughout the following winter in east Korea.

the breakout on 6 December. The C47s and R4Ds took out more than 1,000 wounded and frostbitten men from Hagaru on the 4th, and seventy-eight were removed by C-55 planes that same day from Koto-ri. This left 1,400 casualties at Hagaru and fifty at Koto-ri, yet the hospital tents of both perimeters were cleared before dusk at 5 December.

"Without air evacuation," declared Capt Hering a year later, "casualty handling would have been a debacle and the entire progress of the withdrawal slowed immeasurably."

The achievement is the more remarkable because the Hagaru airstrip was within sight of the Chinese who surrounded the perimeter. Fortunately, the only plane to crash was protected by Corsairs until a rifle company could dash outside the perimeter and rescue the casualties and crew, all of whom survived the accident.

SUCH CRITICAL MEDICAL items as whole blood, antibiotics, litters, and blankets were brought to Hagaru by air-drop. The hospital tents did not long remain empty on 6 December, for 300 new casualties were received as the head of the division column fought its way toward Koto-ri. These patients were treated by medical personnel who remained in the perimeter, and the C-47s flew them out that day. The medical officers and corpsmen marched out with the last troops, whereupon the Chinese occupied the perimeter and airstrip they had failed to take by assault.

At Koto-ri an observation-plane strip had been hurriedly lengthened by Marine engineers until it could be used by C-47s or R4Ds if the pilots were both skilled and lucky. About 600 more casualties were received in this perimeter after the division completed the march from Hagaru. Six surgical teams worked around the clock, giving definitive care or performing operations, and all casualties were evacuated by air in a single day before the column set out for Chinhung-ni.

The worst was over on the 10th when the column reached the foot of the mountains, and the next day found the 1st Mar Div in the warming tents at Hamhung. Marine casualties since 26 November amounted to a total of 7,350, including 4,675 who had been evacuated by air.

The survivors had only four days to wait before embarking as the first division of X Corps to sail for south Korea. This was the beginning of the "amphibious operation in reverse" which ended on Christmas Eve with the successful redeployment by Task Force-90 of all UN troops in northeast Korea.

The 1st Mar Div passed from X Corps into Eighth Army reserve. After several weeks in an assembly area at Masan, the Marines began a series of offensive and defensive operations in coordination with Army divi-

sions. Officers and corpsmen of the 1st Med Bn were put to no such test as the Reservoir evacuations, but the wild, mountainous terrain of operations Killer and Ripper was a constant challenge in the spring of 1951. One of the best solutions to the evacuation problem in such areas was the training of hired South Korean laborers as litter-bearers. Some of these former A-frame porters won the admiration of the Marines by the courage and endurance they showed in rescuing wounded men under fire.

Medical techniques improved with experience as the war continued. Evacuation by helicopter, initiated by the Marines, won general adoption in Korea because of the reduction in the ratio of casualties dying of wounds. By the end of 1951 about 300 helicopters were being used by the Army, Air Force, and Marines for this purpose alone, and the *USS Consolation* had been dubbed a "carrier" after installing a flight deck of 60 x 60 feet for the landing of helicopters with casualties.

Prevention as well as cure of serious wounds was a subject of experiment, and in the summer of 1951 a joint Army-Navy mission went to Korea for field tests of a new type of body armor developed for the Marine Corps. Casualty figures of the war up to this time had shown that nearly thirty-five per cent of the men killed in action and thirty per cent of those dying of wounds had been hit in the thorax or abdomen. About one-third of all fatalities, in short, were caused by wounds in parts of the body which might have been protected by body armor.

The 1st Mar Div and the 2d Inf Div were selected in the early autumn of 1951 as the two major units to try out a new thoraco-abdominal vest weighing between six and seven pounds. Tests proved that this body armor could be worn without too much encumbrance, and that the compressed Fiberglas and Nylon had a satisfactory protective value. Various changes in design were suggested by trials under combat conditions, and among the benefits was a good psychological effect on morale. Detailed results of the joint Army-Navy tests are still regarded as classified material, but it is no secret that modern, lightweight body armor appears to be on the way to widespread adoption.

Not much can be said, as veterans will agree, in praise of the war in Korea. There have been more hardships than thrills in those somber Asiatic highlands, more moments of fatigue than glory. But even Korea has its advantages, and gains have been made in military surgery—such important gains that never before has a man gone into combat with as good a chance of coming out alive and whole.

USMC

*Next Month: Marine Supply and Logistics in Korea.*

# MARINE SUPPLY IN KOREA

*By Kenneth W. Condit*

Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps





*Sea of Japan*

*Yellow Sea*

# MARINE SUPPLY IN KOREA

IT IS A TRUISM THAT AN ARMY  
els on its stomach. While this  
been recognized from the earliest  
of warfare, the complexity of  
ern war has so expanded an  
s stomach that it requires a  
h richer and more varied diet. As  
sult, logistics and strategy have  
ome inseparable, and military  
ers have learned that no strategic  
is stronger than its logistical  
port.

ttler discovered the validity of  
concept when his armies in Rus-  
were caught by winter weather for  
ch they were unprepared. To  
g the lesson closer home, the 1st  
ine Division on Guadalcanal was  
rly lost for lack of logistic support.  
pendent upon an inadequate base  
miles away and with communica-  
is severed by the enemy much of  
time, the Marines were frequent-  
o short of supply that the fate of  
operation hung in the balance.

The Marine Corps, as well as the  
er American armed services,  
med this lesson of World War II  
y. When the Korean crisis broke,  
y had well formulated logistical  
us, highly developed skills, and the  
leus of an effective organization.  
istics was a major problem for the  
ine Corps from the outset. In its  
ation the Marines have demon-

ated versatility and adaptability to  
great variety of conditions. Not  
y have they performed their spe-  
ly, amphibious warfare, they have  
o participated in a mountain cam-  
gn in the dead of winter. In both  
erations, shortage of Army service  
ts imposed an additional burden  
the Marines. Not only did they  
e to support their own troops, but  
n furnish service units to perform  
ies normally carried out by Corps  
ops.

n all these situations, the rigors of  
Korean campaign have demanded

constant improvisation and adapta-  
bility. Every means of transport has  
been employed. Marines have used  
their familiar LVTs, DUKWs, and  
trucks. They have also tried their  
hands at railroading and air trans-  
port. And on some occasions, they  
have had to rely upon the most primi-  
tive form of transportation, the hu-  
man back.

For the Marines, the Korean war  
began on 2 July when the Joint  
Chiefs of Staff granted Gen Mac-  
Arthur's request for a Marine RCT  
with its own air. By 13 July, these  
forces, organized as the 1st Provision-  
al Marine Brigade, had started to em-  
bark. Nine days later, MacArthur's  
request for a war-strength Marine di-  
vision was granted, and the work of  
preparing the 1st Marine Division for  
movement overseas was begun. Logis-  
tic problems in this movement were  
considerable. According to Marine  
Corps doctrine, all units were to have  
on hand a full initial allowance of  
supplies and equipment, and service  
units were to stock thirty days of re-  
plenishment supplies based on war-  
time rates of expenditure. But these  
replenishment stocks, based on peace-  
time tables of organization, were pret-  
ty well depleted by the brigade, leav-  
ing slim pickings for the division  
units.

Issue of equipment to division  
units and the accumulation of thirty-  
day replenishment stocks was a for-  
midable task, particularly as the out-  
loading was to begin on 10 August.  
Further to complicate the logistical  
task, the destination and mission of  
the division were in doubt. It was  
not known whether the Marines  
would land in Japan or go direct to  
Korea. Nor did the division staff  
know whether they were to prepare  
for an assault or administrative land-  
ing. With these issues still in doubt,  
the task of equipping the division  
began.

As troops poured in to Camp Pen-  
dleton, they were issued individual  
equipment when necessary from the

In cooperation with the Historical  
Branch, G-3, Headquarters, U. S. Ma-  
rine Corps, the *Gazette* herewith pre-  
sents the last in a series of official ac-  
counts dealing with Marine operations  
in Korea. Prepared by writers and re-  
searchers of the Historical Branch,  
these articles have been based on avail-  
able records and reports from units in  
Korea.

Admittedly it is too soon to write a  
definitive history of Marine fighting in  
Korea. Not only are enemy sources  
lacking, but even Marine and Army  
records are still incomplete. Articles  
of the length to be used in the *Ga-  
zette*, moreover, do not allow space  
for more than an outline of operations  
which will ultimately be given the de-  
tailed treatment of a monograph.

But timeliness is also an end to be  
sought, and these preliminary narra-  
tives have been based on Marine and  
Army reports received up to this time.

Post Supply Depot. Units arriving  
from the 2d Division at Camp Le-  
jeune to be incorporated in the 1st  
Division sent their equipment, except  
for vehicles, to the Marine Corps Re-  
cruit Depot, San Diego, to be sorted.  
Tanks, trucks, and other heavy equip-  
ment were sent to Naval Station, San  
Diego. Shortages of motor transport,  
signal, and engineer equipment were  
made good from stocks in moth balls  
at the Barstow annex of the San Fran-  
cisco Depot of Supplies.

Loading of ammunition began on  
8 August, and of other supplies two  
days later. To avoid congesting the  
streets of downtown San Diego, load-  
ing was done in two increments. A  
total of forty-five days supply of ra-  
tions, thirty days of fuel, and five  
units of fire were mounted out, and  
by the 18th ships were ready to sail.

While the 1st Marine Division con-  
voy was at sea, an advance planning  
group from the division staff flew to  
Tokyo to begin planning for the em-  
ployment of the Marines in Korea.  
At the outset, the Army agreed to  
furnish resupply of all items common  
to both Army and Marine Corps. The

By Kenneth W. Condit

Corps would have to furnish for themselves those items used only by Marines. To process this material, a supply regulating detachment was established in Japan.

The immediate mission for the 1st Marine Division was to act as the landing force of the Army's X Corps in an operation designed to take the Korean port of Inchon by amphibious assault, and then to push inland and seize the former South Korean capitol, Seoul. The effect of this landing in the enemy rear would be to cut his communications, forcing a withdrawal to avoid the destruction of his forces. At the same time, Eighth Army was to break out of the Pusan Perimeter to the south and push north to link up with X Corps.

The Inchon landing presented a serious logistical problem. Because of the extreme tidal range, landing craft could only reach the beach at high tide. Assault elements would be isolated after landing until the next high tide. To supply these troops during the interval, eight LSTs load-

ed with fifty tons of ammunition, thirty tons of food, fifteen tons of water, and five tons of fuel were to land right behind the assault waves.

OTHER PROBLEMS confronting logistics planners concerned the build up of supply across the beach, opening of the port of Inchon at the earliest possible moment, and the orderly distribution of supply to front line units. To meet these problems, a logistical task organization was formed under the Commanding Officer of the Army 2d Engineer Special Brigade. In addition to the engineer brigade, it included the Marine 1st Shore Party Battalion, 1st Combat Service Group, and 7th Motor Transport Battalion. At war strength an engineer special brigade is set up to give logistical support to a three-division corps in amphibious assault and to operate a port for a force of the same size. But, owing to a serious shortage of Army port and amphibious service units in the Far East, it was necessary to employ Marines for some of these tasks.

The logistic plan called for the Shore Party Bn to supervise unloading across the beaches at first, with the 1st Combat Service Group attached to operate beach dumps. The 2d Engineer Special Brigade was to take over control of all shore party activities upon order of the CGO of the 1st Marine Division, and also to open and operate the port. The Shore Party Battalion was to continue to unload cargo over the beach under control of the engineer brigade while the 1st Combat Service Group was to set up consolidated supply dumps in the port area.

The 7th Motor Transport Battalion had been attached to the 1st Marine Division to give it the motor transport needed for extended warfare, but X Corps was so short of motor transport that the battalion was employed at corps level throughout the operation.

While planning was in progress, ships carrying the 1st Marine Division began to arrive in Kobe, Japan. As these ships had been commercial

Inchon—supplies had to wait for a high tide



loaded in San Diego, cargo had to be unloaded for assault. To reach the target on time, LSTs would have to sail by 10 September and transports by the 12th. This sailing date left so little time that it was decided to unload only the assault units. The others would go organizationally unloaded. So rapidly had the ships been loaded on the West Coast that much of the ammunition, rations, and fuel had been distributed throughout the incoming shipping and had to be reassembled before it could be loaded onto assault shipping.

TO ADD TO THE problems, a typhoon struck Kobe on 3 September. Waves washed over cargo-laden piers, blowing out vehicles. Ships broke loose and drifted across the harbor. Miraculously, only one was damaged badly it had to be put in dry dock. In spite of these difficulties, loading was completed on time. Marine units carried five units of fire and thirty days supply of all other items. An additional five units of fire was loaded aboard one ship as corps reserve.

The vessels carrying the 1st Marine Division navigated the treacherous approaches to Inchon and arrived off the port in the early morning hours of 15 September. At 0630, the 3d and 5th Marines landed on Green Beach on the island of Wolmi-do. Very little resistance was encountered, and the Marines quickly overran this beach and guarding the approaches to the port of Inchon. Supply operations in support of the landing were carried out by a team from the 1st Shore Party Bn. Owing to the difficulty of navigating the treacherous approaches in darkness, the larger transports carrying heavy cargo-handling equipment did not arrive in time to unload machinery for use during the assault phase. Shore party personnel were forced to manhandle cargo across the beach. Unloading was further handicapped by extensive mud which hampered the beaching of landing craft, and by lack of dump space ashore.

The main landing on Red and Blue Beaches on the mainland was executed on the next high tide. Twelve hours later. Assault units of the 5th and 1st Marines were ashore on schedule and moved rapidly in-

land against only sporadic resistance. On the heels of the assault troops of the 5th Marines, men of the 1st Shore Party Bn landed on Red Beach with the eight LSTs loaded with high priority supplies. By working throughout the night, the 1st Shore Party Bn was able to unload these ships in time for them to retract on the morning tide. Personnel of the 1st Combat Service Group set up beach dumps for temporary storage of the supplies as they were landed and issued them to combat units.

On Blue Beach, the 1st Marines was supported by a smaller contingent of the 1st Shore Party Bn. As this beach was only to be used for the initial assault, no supply build-up was to be made. In addition to supplies in the hands of the assault troops, additional stocks were loaded in LVTs, but in the confusion of the landing they went to the wrong beach and were stranded on the mud flats by the receding tide. Resistance to the landing was so light that these supplies were not needed until the next morning.

The morning of D+1 found all the beaches organized and operating according to plan. Personnel from the 1st Combat Service Group located sites for consolidated supply dumps in the port area and began to build up the stocks for issue to service units. Stocks in the beach dumps were depleted by issue to troops and by transfer to the consolidated dumps. The 1st Service Battalion landed and opened a ration and fuel dump for issue to combat units of the 1st Marine Division.

Unloading continued over Red Beach, but it soon became apparent that this beach did not have the capacity to support the operations ashore. Strong currents, great tide range, and treacherous mud flats combined with inexperienced civilian crews on LSTs to prevent an adequate flow of supplies. A hasty change of plan was made to increase LST beaching facilities on Green Beach. With the movement of the 1st Marines inland, Blue Beach was closed, permitting the transfer of shore party personnel to Green Beach to handle the additional unloading.

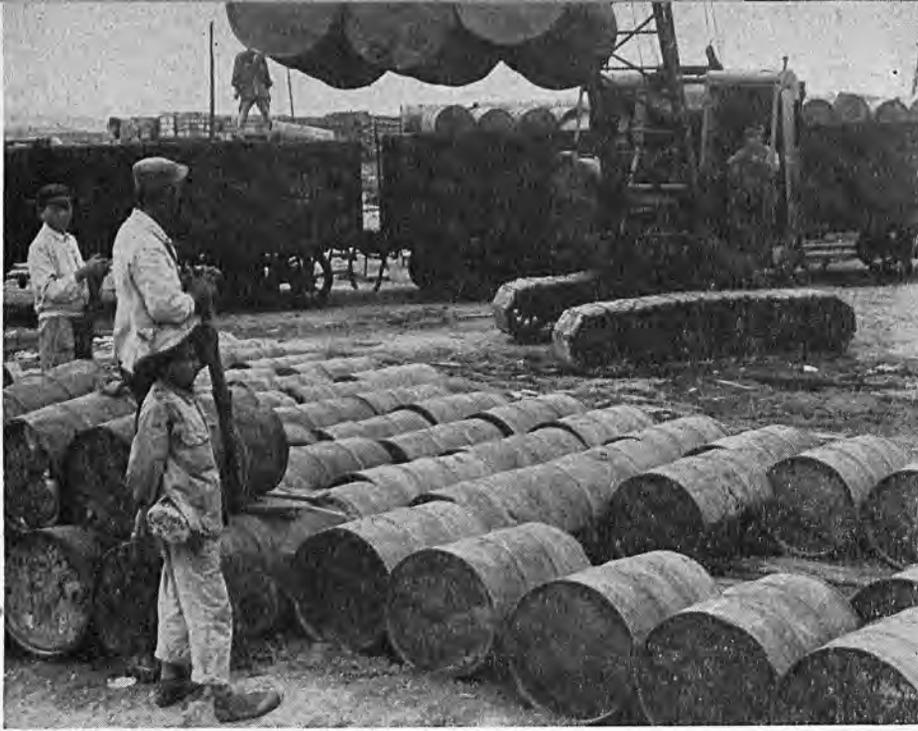
On 17 September, D+2, the 2d Engineer Special Brigade assumed



control of all logistical operations in the Inchon port area. The 1st Shore Party Bn was relieved of duties on Red Beach to devote all its energies to unloading operations at Green Beach. The 1st Combat Service Group continued to operate consolidated dumps. This organization was the storage agency for all X Corps supplies in the port except for ammunition and engineer supplies, handled by Army units.

Motor transport was so short that the 7th Motor Transport Bn, originally intended to support the 1st Marine Division, was held in the port area under control of the engineer brigade. Of a total of 205 trucks available for port operations, 168 were Marine, 132 from the 7th Motor Transport Bn, and thirty-six from the 1st Combat Service Group.

A partial remedy for the shortage of motor transport was the employment of rail transportation. Although plans did not call for railroad operations to begin until D+30, the 2d Engineer Special Brigade rounded up Korean train and track crews in In-



No express, but one answer to the truck shortage

chon and began the work of repairing the Inchon-Seoul line immediately after landing. By the evening of D+1, a switch engine and six cars were operating in the Inchon area. On D+4, the first train, carrying 1200 Marines, was dispatched over the Seoul line as far as Ascom City, a distance of about five miles. The first Marine supply train made the complete run from Inchon to Yongdongpo, a suburb of Seoul, on 26 September. During the Inchon-Seoul operation, a total of 350,000 rations, 315,000 gallons of fuel, 1,260 tons of ammunition, and 10,000 troops were moved by rail.

While these logistical agencies were unloading and storing supplies in the Inchon area, the 1st Marine Division service units were operating forward dumps of ammunition, rations, and fuel. The 1st Service Bn opened the ration and fuel dump on 16 September, and the 1st Ordnance Bn opened the ammunition dump a day later. Both dumps were displaced forward frequently to keep up with the rapidly advancing combat troops.

By 19 September, the 5th Marines had reached the south bank of the Han. To assist the crossing the following morning, the 1st Shore Party Bn was detached from the 2d Engineer Special Brigade and reverted to 1st Marine Division control. The battalion established a ferry and also trans-shipped some cargo from

trucks to LVTs and DUKWs for the crossing. A second ferry was established further upstream near Seoul to support the crossing of the 1st Marines. To facilitate the resupply of troops operating north of the river, the 1st Service Bn and the 1st Ordnance Bn set up supply dumps for the issue of rations, fuel, and ammunition on the north bank at both ferry sites.

On 21 September, X Corps assumed control of operations ashore. At the same time, the Inchon Base Command took over control of logistics in the port area. The 2d Engineer Special Brigade was attached to the base command, and the 1st Combat Service Group was detached from the engineer brigade and attached directly to the Inchon Base Command.

Combat troops of the 1st Marine Division reached the approaches of Seoul on the same day. After a rapid and lightly opposed advance, the Marines now met heavy resistance from a determined enemy barricaded in the city. It took six days of heavy fighting and two more of mopping up to secure the city and its environs, but by the 29th enemy resistance had collapsed. Eight days later, Eighth Army troops, who had broken out of the Pusan perimeter on 16 September relieved X Corps in the Inchon-Seoul area. But the end of the Inchon-Seoul operation offered no respite for the Marines. Already new operations were in the planning stage.

With the defeat and retreat of North Korean forces beyond the parallel, Gen MacArthur prepared to pursue the defeated enemy, completely mopping up the remnants of the army, and occupy all Korea to the Yalu River. X Corps, including the 1st Marine Division, was to make an amphibious landing at the east coast port of Wonsan, then strike westward across the peninsula and link up with the Eighth Army in a gigantic pincer movement.

Logistical planners on X Corps staff were faced with the same shortage of Army service units that had plagued the Inchon operation. For the operation in northeast Korea there were to be two beachheads, one at Suwon for the 7th Infantry Division, and another at Wonsan for the remainder of X Corps. The 2d Engineer Special Brigade was to operate the Suwon beachhead, leaving the 1st Combat Service Group and Shore Party Bn to operate the beachhead and port at Wonsan.

LOADING OUT FROM Inchon presented some serious problems. Facilities at the port were so limited that unloading of incoming shipping had to cease while outloading was in progress. It was impossible to outload completely because supplies for the Wonsan operation were still coming in. Even with unloading reduced to a trickle, Inchon could not handle the outloading of the entire X Corps, and the 7th Infantry Division had to be sent by truck to Pusan for that purpose. Again, as at Inchon, the time was critically short. To reach the target area by a D-Day of 20 October, the LSTs would have to sail on the 15th and other shipping by the 16th, only eight days after loading began. So short was the time that only assault elements could be combat-loaded. Others went as an organizational load.

To support a rapid advance inland, each RCT was provided with six trucks and trailers carrying an additional one-half unit of fire, six trucks loaded with rations, and eight trucks of fuel. In addition, three truck companies were to be loaded with ammunition proportioned to meet the needs of an RCT, and were to be ready to establish an RCT ammunition dump

The convoy carrying the 1st Marine Division sailed from Inchon on schedule and prepared to land troops at Wonsan on 25 October. But Wonsan had fallen on the 10th to rapidly advancing ROK troops. At the same time, Eighth Army troops on the eastern side of the peninsula smashed remnants of the North Korean army and entered Pyongyang, the North Korean capital, on the 19th. These events necessitated a change of plan for X Corps. It was decided to make an administrative landing at Wonsan, then to push on to the Manchurian border, mopping up the last remnants of North Korean forces and supplying the country.

For the 1st Combat Service Group and the 1st Shore Party Bn, the decision to make an administrative landing did not call for a change of plan. Supplies still had to be unloaded across the beach and stored in dumps for issue to division service units. The task of opening and operating the port would be no less difficult because troops did not land in a planned formation.

On the night of 25 October, unloading was started. The 1st Shore Party

Bn had to overcome offshore sand bars and areas of deep sand between the water's edge and solid ground. But in spite of these difficulties, unloading went steadily forward, and by the 31st the 1st Marine Division had been unloaded. The 1st Combat Service Group, which came ashore on the 26th, set to work to establish supply dumps and to clear the port for unloading operations. By 2 November this task was completed, and ships began to unload at the docks. Unloading of other X Corps units kept the 1st Combat Service Group and the 1st Shore Party Bn busy while the remainder of the 1st Marine Division pushed on to the north into the mountains towards the Chosin Reservoir.

The 7th Marines, first Marine unit to move into the Chosin Reservoir area, encountered a Chinese Communist division near Sudong on 4 November. The four-day battle which followed was a forecast of events to come, when the Chinese arrived in the area in force. The encounter with a new enemy served to emphasize what might become a serious logistic problem. Advance elements of the

division were already 108 miles from their base of supply at Wonsan, and every step the Marines took into the mountains served to stretch an already tenuous supply line.

A partial remedy to the problem was to move the division dumps to Hamhung. This move was carried out by the 1st Service and 1st Ordnance Bns on 4 November. Supplies could now be brought forward by X Corps over the sixty-nine miles of rail from Wonsan. From Hamhung to the 7th Marines position at Sudong was thirty miles over narrow, twisting roads. As this regiment and other division units pushed on further north, they would encounter a precipitous rise through the Funchilin Pass to the Chosin Reservoir.

To facilitate the supply of these units, the 1st Service Bn put into service the narrow gauge Chosin branch of the Shinko railroad. The Korean manager rounded up crews to operate the line. On 6 November the first train pulled out of Hamhung in an effort to reach the 7th Marines but blocked tunnels prevented the trip and not until three days later did a train reach Sudong. By 11 November

### Koto-ri—keeping engines running around the clock was tough on fuel supply



the rail line was clear all the way to the bottom of the Funchilin Pass at Chinhung-ni. From this point trains had once been lifted by a cable to the top, but destruction of the power facilities made it impossible to run the cable. Chinhung-ni became the site of a division railhead with dumps for rations, fuel and ammunition. Stocks of supplies sufficient to furnish rations and fuel for two RCTs for three days and two units of fire for two RCTs were maintained here.

☛ DURING THE increasingly colder November days, the 1st Marine Division moved cautiously ahead. By the 15th, the 7th Marines was in Hagaru at the foot of the Chosin Reservoir and the other infantry regiments were soon to follow. On the 19th, supply dumps for rations, fuel, and ammunition were opened at Hagaru. To handle supply problems at Hagaru a supply regulating station was set up under command of the Commanding Officer, 1st Service Bn.

While these steps were being taken

to strengthen the supply facilities for the division in the Reservoir area, installations in the rear area were tightened up. The 1st Combat Service Group, having completed the unloading of X Corps troops at Wonsan, moved to the port of Hungnam to set up in-transit depots for the corps. Its job was to break down incoming cargo into the proper classifications and forward it to dumps in the Hamhung area. Employing from 2,000 to 2,500 Korean laborers a day, the group moved as much as 6,000 tons of cargo in a twenty-four hour period.

☛ ON 24 NOVEMBER, Gen MacArthur issued new orders to X Corps and Eighth Army calling for a general offensive to end the war. While Eighth Army continued to advance to the north on the western side of the Korean peninsula, X Corps, with the 1st Marine Division as the spearhead, was to attack west to link up with Eighth Army in a massive envelopment. To direct the new attack, a division command group moved

forward to Hagaru, with the assistant G-4 included to direct log operations.

The 7th Marines attacked west of the 24th, reaching Yudam-ni two days later. The 5th Marines moved up behind the 7th on 27 November, prepared to pass through and continue the attack to the west. Meanwhile the 1st Marines stationed a battalion at Hagaru, Koto-ri, Chinhung-ni to guard the line of communications to the coast.

On the advice of the Commanding Officer, 7th Marines, it was decided to build up Yudam-ni as an intermediate supply base. Three days' rations had just been delivered, and a reply of ammunition was loaded on trucks, ready for delivery on the 27th. This convoy never got through. On the night of the 27th, the Chinese struck in great force, and the Marine strong points were soon cut off.

In spite of the efforts of the 1st Marine Division to build up supply levels in the Reservoir area, it was obvious that the beleaguered Ma-

**Hungnam—they still had their supplies and were ready to go again**





On-call helicopters met emergencies

ould not fight their way out without supply. Troop units at Yudam-ni and Hagaru had two days supply of rations and fuel. At Hagaru and Yudam-ni there were additional stocks of supplies for seven and three days respectively. The ammunition picture was not so bright. There was only half unit of fire in the hands of troops at both Hagaru and Yudam-ni, and only one unit of fire had been accumulated at Hagaru. The failure of an ammunition convoy to get through meant that there was no support at Yudam-ni except what was in the hands of the units.

All efforts to re-open the line of communications failed, leaving the Marines in the Reservoir area totally dependent on air drop for resupply. The Combat Cargo Command of Far East Air Forces stepped into the breach, making supply of X Corps troops in the Reservoir area the first priority mission. The Group's C-47s, C-119s and a few attached Marine R4Ds flew in the needed ammunition, food, fuel, and miscellaneous

items of equipment to keep the Marines fighting. Supplies were packaged and prepared for dropping by the Marine 1st Air Delivery Platoon, operating from Yonpo, or by the Combat Cargo Command in Japan.

After three days of bitter fighting, the 1st Marine Division began to withdraw towards the coast. According to plan, the movement was to be made in three stages. First the 5th and 7th Marines were to fight their way back to Hagaru.

After a pause for rest and reorganization, the withdrawal was to continue in two further stages to Koto-ri, then to Chinhung-ni. At this point, Army troops were to make contact and assist in the journey to the sea. Thus, the Marines were to pull back from one strong point to another, never having to move more than fourteen miles in one hop.

While the 5th and 7th Marines were fighting their way back to Hagaru, the division began to build up supply levels there to provide for the next leg of the journey. Owing to

poor communications, it was impossible to receive accurate requisitions from the 5th and 7th Marines, so their requirements had to be estimated. Rations and ammunition sufficient to carry the Marines to Koto-ri were flown in. Fuel supplies were built up for the journey all the way to Chinhung-ni. At the same time, stocks were built up at Koto-ri to provide resupply for the Marines when they reached that point.

Estimates proved to be accurate in all categories except fuel. Frequent halts of the column and the necessity to keep engines running so they would not freeze, exhausted the supply by the time the column reached Koto-ri. Fortunately, "on call" air drop loads had been prepared to meet such a contingency, and the necessary gasoline was dropped at Koto-ri.

By 11 December, the 1st Marine Division had arrived in Hamhung, completing its withdrawal from the Chosin Reservoir. During these twelve days a total of 119,630 "C" rations, 37,710 gallons of gasoline, 3,552,940 rounds of small arms ammunition, 58,862 mortar rounds, and 9,620 105mm rounds were requested for delivery by air. Of these, division supply personnel calculated that about seventy to eighty percent of the rations were received and usable and seventy percent of the gasoline. Ninety percent of the small arms and mortar ammunition requested could be used. Attempts to drop artillery ammunition were not so successful. A combination of inaccurate drops and rounds damaged on landing reduced the usable ammunition to about twenty-five percent of that requested.

Marine service units ended the northeast Korea operation as they started it—by loading the division aboard ships for redeployment to another theatre of the war. As early as 6 December, Gen MacArthur had decided to abandon northeast Korea, and to concentrate all forces under Eighth Army. Marine units moved directly from temporary quarters at Hamhung to the port of Hungnam for embarkation. The first units went aboard ship on the 12th, and on 15 December, two months after their departure from Inchon, the 1st Marine Division sailed from Hungnam for South Korea.

# RED CHINA ON THE OFFENSIVE

*By Lynn Montross*

Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps



Reprinted from July 1953 issue of The Marine Corps Gazette



THE WORD "RESERVOIR" HAS A special meaning in the traditions of the U. S. Marine Corps. It will always call to memory a column of parka-clad Leathernecks fighting in the bitter cold of December 1950—the men of the 1st Marine Division who cut their way from the Chosin Reservoir to Hamhung through eight CCF divisions.

Yet there is another artificial lake that deserves a chapter in Marine history. It is the Hwachon Reservoir, a mountain-locked body of water lying just north of the 38th Parallel along the rocky spinal column of Korea. For it was in this area that the 1st Mar Div had some of its hardest and least known actions—fights worthy of comparison with the battles of Inchon-Seoul and the Chosin Reservoir.

The time was April 1951. And the occasion was the beginning of the enemy's double-barreled Spring offensive, with Red China shooting the works for a decision in Korea.

This effort did not come as any surprise. There was not even much mystery as to when and where the initial blows would fall. The Eighth U. S. Army had been given timely and accurate reports of the enemy's build-up. But nothing is certain in war except uncertainty, and it could not have been foreseen that a secondary CCF effort would lead to a sudden breakthrough west of Hwachon Reservoir.

This easy penetration, which may have astonished the Chinese themselves, exposed the entire left flank of the 1st Mar Div by opening a gap in the adjoining sector held by a ROK division. The Leathernecks were threatened with envelopment, and it took some vigorous fighting and maneuvering to prevent the enemy from exploiting his advance.

Captured documents made it plain that the Communist purpose was nothing less than the destruction of the Eighth Army and eviction of United Nations forces from Korea. This ambitious program was to be carried out by an army estimated at about 700,000 CCF and North Korean troops, not counting units training in Manchuria.

Major counter-offensives had been launched twice before by Red China. In November 1950 and again the last night of the year, the in-

## By Lynn Montross

vaders struck along a trans-peninsular front. Total advances of some 200 miles were made, yet these territorial gains could not compensate for appalling casualties. For the Eighth Army and its allied Republic of Korea divisions were still intact after withdrawing to final defense lines. Every man in the ranks realized, moreover, that ground had been sacrificed rather than personnel and equipment when the Communist pressure became too heavy.

The proof of Eighth Army fighting spirit was demonstrated shortly after the end of the second CCF effort. LtGen Matthew B. Ridgway, the new Eighth Army commander, immediately launched the first of a series of limited UN offensives. While one of these drives was in progress, another was being planned and activated on a still larger scale. Thus from 15 January to 22 April 1951 the UN forces were continually striking, and the initial reconnaissance in force by an RCT had grown into the coordinated advance of three corps.

One UN operation, coming to a finish on 4 March, was followed three days later by the jump-off of another. Both offensives, like their forerunners, were planned primarily for the purpose of inflicting damage on the enemy. Gen Ridgway constantly stressed the need for security and cautioned his corps commanders to observe his three basic tenets: "coordination, maximum punishment, and maintenance intact of major units."

Another primary purpose was to keep the enemy off balance and disrupt his obvious build-up for a new counter-offensive. And though the gaining of ground was considered secondary, plans for the March offensive envisioned a northward advance to a strong UN line which could be used either for offense or defense.

"Good footwork . . . combined with firepower"—this was Gen Ridgway's formula for victory over a numerically superior enemy. It paid off so well that most of the objectives were secured by the end of March. Seoul had been reoccupied without a fight by UN forces nearing the 38th Parallel after gains of about 50 kilometers.

Only in one respect had the results been unsatisfactory—the damage inflicted on the enemy, heavy as it was, fell below expectations. That was because the Chinese had conserved their forces by delaying tactics suited to the mountainous terrain. Small units put up a temporary defense to screen withdrawals in the rear, then pulled back to prepared positions.

On 29 March, therefore, Gen Ridgway published a plan for continuing the momentum of the drive and adding to its accomplishments. The assault troops jumped off again on 2 April, and the Eighth Army ground on methodically to new objectives as the enemy continued to retreat.

The Communist forces might have been compared to an antagonist backtracking to get set for taking aim with the shotgun. There could be no question about both barrels being loaded, for CCF offensive movements were reported daily on a basis of air sightings. Undoubtedly the enemy would pull the trigger at his first opportunity, but meanwhile the footwork and firepower of the Eighth Army continued to keep him off balance.

Chunchon was abandoned, just as Hongchon had been, by Communists who kept up their delaying tactics while retreating north of the 38th Parallel. This was the situation when LtGen James A. Van Fleet assumed command of the Eighth Army on 14 April, after Gen Ridgway was named the new supreme commander

This article was prepared a year ago by the Historical Branch, G-3, Headquarters U. S. Marine Corps, in cooperation with the GAZETTE. It was originally intended for presentation in the series of consecutive official preliminary narratives dealing with Marine operations in Korea. The events treated in the article were then so recent, however, that difficulties arose in obtaining clearance for publication.

In the interests of military security, the GAZETTE and the Historical Branch postponed publication until *Red China on the Offensive* could be fully cleared. Care has been taken to delete references to Eighth Army positions, phase lines, units or statistics. These omissions, fortunately, do not detract from the story, as told by records and reports, of the part played by the 1st Marine Division in blocking the two CCF offensives in the Spring of 1951.

to succeed General of the Army Douglas MacArthur.

Gen Van Fleet, formerly head of the American Military Mission in Greece, visited one CP after another while pressing the UN advance. Although the Communists continued to retreat, reports indicated that 12 corps, numbering three divisions each, were poised behind the front for a counter-stroke. Movements of troops and supply vehicles were screened by the smoke of burning brush, but the enemy appeared to be preparing for a major attack in the Seoul area and a secondary effort on the central front.

Not only was the CCF counter-stroke a foregone conclusion, but it could also be assumed that further UN advances would force the enemy's hand. Already the UN forces were within striking distance of the so-called "Iron Triangle"—the comparatively level Chorwon-Pyongyang-Kumhwa area where the Chinese had utilized a good network of roads to concentrate for their offensive. The enemy would soon have to stand or attack, and the Eighth Army plan was flexible enough to provide for an orderly withdrawal to lines suited to an aggressive defense. This concept was in line with the Eighth Army policy of placing less value on positions than men and equipment, but the attack was to continue vigorously toward the approaches to the Iron Triangle.

On 21 April, after a brief build-up, the assault units of I and IX Corps renewed an advance calculated to goad the enemy into action.



*Across the Pukhan to goad the enemy*

The 1st Mar Div, as part of IX Corps, had as its objective the Hwachon Dam on the southeastern approaches to the Iron Triangle.

The enemy had recently held this area, and it seemed likely that another stubborn defense would be made. On the first day, however, the Leathernecks met almost no opposition, and by the afternoon of the 22d they reached their objectives. The enemy had put up a fight at the Hwachon Dam, but the 1st Korean Marine Corps Regiment took the position after forcing a crossing of the Pukhan River in DUKWs and rubber boats.

This unit, composed of Koreans trained by U. S. Marines, had distinguished itself as a fourth RCT of the 1st Mar Div during the past month. Thus on the evening of 22 April the lineup consisted from left to right of RCT-7, RCT-5 and the 1st KMC Regt, with RCT-1 in reserve. A ROK division held the sector to the west, and to the east was an infantry division of X Corps.

The first few hours of darkness passed quietly. Resistance had been light everywhere on the Eighth Army front, and officers in the various CPs

*Below: The 11th Marines moved forward to cover the withdrawal*



*Left: KMCs—the fourth RCT*



were planning a next day's advance which was never to materialize. For the first CCF attacks began at 2215 on the central front and continued throughout the night. The enemy had pulled the trigger on his long expected counter-offensive.

Before midnight the 1st Mar Div was notified by corps that the Chinese had smashed through the lines of the ROK division in the sector to the west. The penetration, extending to a point about three and a half miles south of the MLR, had opened a gap of 1,000 yards between the Marines and the nearest ROK unit.

Orders for the next day's attack were cancelled as the 1st Mar Div ordered the three forward regiments to consolidate for defense and patrol to the front. RCT-1, in reserve, was directed to send a battalion to the divisional left flank with a mission of blocking CCF attempts at envelopment. The assignment fell to the reinforced 1st Bn, which moved out at 0100 with a platoon of 4.2 mortars.

These preparations came just in the nick of time. Within the next two hours the 1st Mar Div was beating off CCF attacks on both flanks.

On the left a force of undetermined numbers struck the 1st Bn of RCT-7 with mortars, small arms, and automatic weapons. The enemy pulled back at 0300, after getting the worst of a grenade duel, only to try again an hour later in estimated battalion strength. Able Co received more than its share of the assault, but counter-attacked to wipe out a Chinese infiltration and restore the lines before the enemy withdrew at day-break.

On the divisional right flank, just west of the Hwachon Dam, the KMC Regt repulsed a succession of assaults which lasted into the daylight hours. Both regimental flanks were threatened, and on the left the enemy nearly surrounded a company of the 1st Bn. Only a platoon remained on position at 0400 when a counter-attack regained the lost ground.

RCT-5 had its turn after the Chinese infiltrated along a ridgeline in the darkness to occupy Hill 313, dominating the town of Hwachon. The enemy was holding the crest when elements of 1/5 attacked against small arms and automatic fire. An air strike was called in support, but meanwhile the infantry

stormed up the slope to drive off an estimated 150 to 200 CCF troops.

On the morning of the 23d the 1st Mar Div still held firm after defeating all enemy attempts at envelopment. But this was only the first round, and renewed CCF attacks could be expected on the wide-open left flank. In anticipation of this danger, Corps ordered the 1st Mar Div to fall back. This maneuver might be compared to closing a gate in the face of the enemy. Pivoting on the right flank while swinging southward along the exposed left flank, the division pulled back to a new diagonal line about six miles to the rear at its maximum depth.

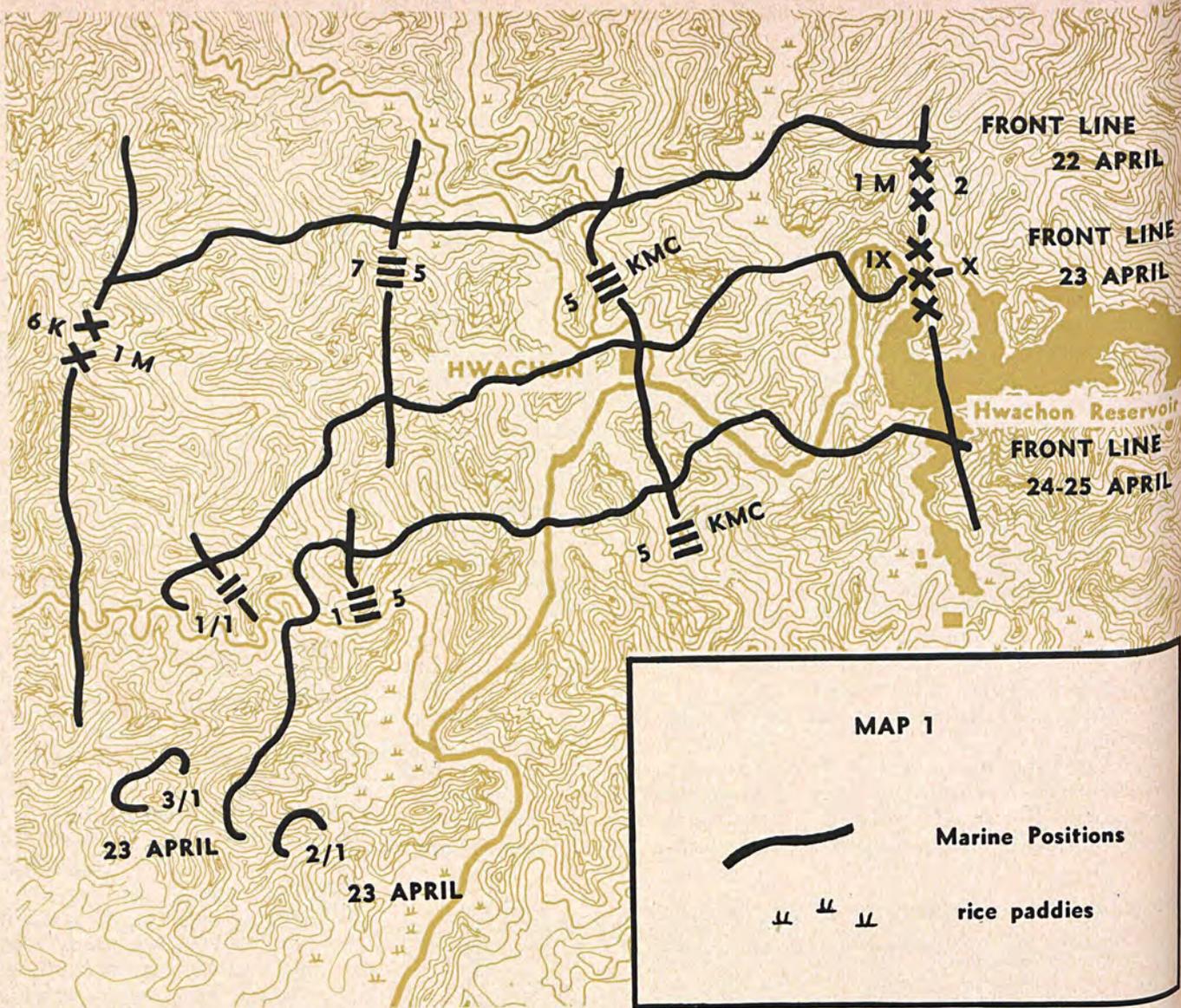
RCT-5 and the KMC Regt fell back without enemy interference. A more difficult task awaited RCT-7, and the 2d Bn covered the withdrawal of the 1st while helicopters evacuated the wounded. This regiment assumed control of the 1st Bn of RCT-1, and the other two battalions were brought up from reserve by division orders to dig in along a ridgeline about two miles south on the divisional left flank. Thus the positions were not tied-in, and it was a reasonable conjecture that this line could afford only a temporary defense.

The readjustment of positions was completed by nightfall, when the three regiments awaited the attack. It was not long in coming, for Corps had not yet been able to bring up enough reserves to close the dangerous gap to the west. Soon after darkness the enemy struck from two directions, making a secondary effort in the north while attempting to turn the Marine left flank.

Veterans of Inchon-Seoul and the Chosin Reservoir could remember few occasions when Marines had a tougher fight. For the entire division was involved all night and most of the following day, with the 11th Marines and other supporting arms backing up the four infantry regiments.

Just as the blow of a whip is most vicious where the lash curls around its target, the CCF attack was hardest on the left flank of the 1st Mar Div. On the opposite flank, the KMC Regt and RCT-5 were least heavily engaged, though under attack or fire the whole night. RCT-7, farther to the west, had a rougher





time of it. But it was RCT-1 on the extreme left which caught the full fury of the CCF effort. Here the tactical lash cut deeply into Marine positions, and the two isolated battalions had an all-night battle to hold their ground.

The Chinese made some use of mortar and artillery fire. But for the most part they relied on small arms and automatic weapons while infiltrating through the darkness to a point near enough for throwing grenades. And having recently retreated from this area, the officers had an intimate knowledge of ridges and draws leading into Marine territory.

The Leathernecks had to maneuver as well as fight. Shortly after midnight, Corps notified Division that withdrawals to a new defensive line would be necessary. Thus after beating off CCF attacks all night,

the 1st Mar Div was up against the problem of pulling back under fire in broad daylight.

Typical of the critical actions on the hard-pressed Marine left flank was the effort made by the enemy in estimated regimental strength to cut off the 3d Bn of RCT-1, dug in along a ridge. The Chinese kept up their assaults all night, despite heavy losses, without effecting a penetration. At 0930 on the 24th the battalion was still holding its ground, though nearly out of ammunition and in danger of being surrounded.

Not only was the 3d Bn itself in peril, but the entire division was endangered. Division orders to withdraw were executed by 3/1 under heavy CCF automatic and small arms fire as the men fell back through the 2d Bn, which covered a retirement further supported by artillery and air strikes. When the 2d Bn

pulled out in its turn, the enemy managed to cut off and destroy two jeeps.

The 1st Bn, which had been hotly engaged on the left of 1/7, was released that morning from operational control of RCT-7. Under enemy pressure the three reunited battalions of RCT-1 completed their withdrawal and dug in on high ground. Again they held a line facing west, so as to repel further enemy attacks from that critical direction.

The KMC Regt and RCT-5 had no opposition when breaking off contact with the enemy and taking their positions along the new defensive line of 24 April (Map 2). This line was so much shorter that RCT-7 was withdrawn altogether and given rear area security missions.

Two Chinese probing attacks were repulsed on the night of 24-25 April by the 2d and 3d Bns of RCT-1.

Quiet prevailed elsewhere on the 1st Mar Div front except for a few mortar rounds lobbed into the positions of RCT-5.

Patrols sent out on the 25th by the 1st and 3d Bns of RCT-1 had no difficulty in making contact. The 3/1 patrol became heavily engaged only 200 yards from its own battalion positions, and the 1/1 patrol had to be extricated by tanks. In the RCT-5 sector, however, a tank-infantry patrol made no contacts in the 1/5 sector, and two 2/5 patrols ranged as far out as 1,500 yards without finding any enemy.

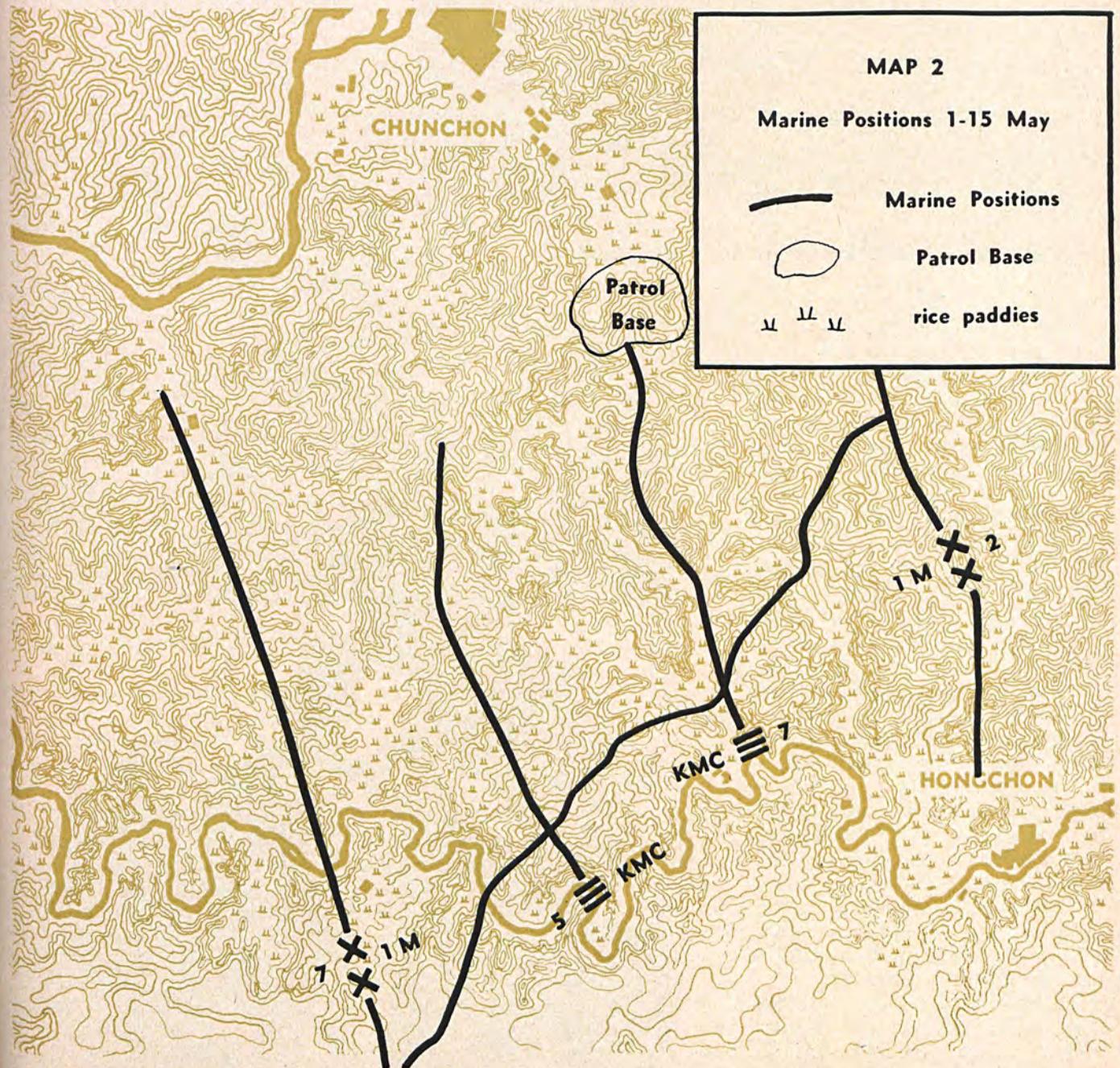
These tests having confirmed that the left flank was still the most vulnerable spot, added security was gained by attaching 3/7 to the left

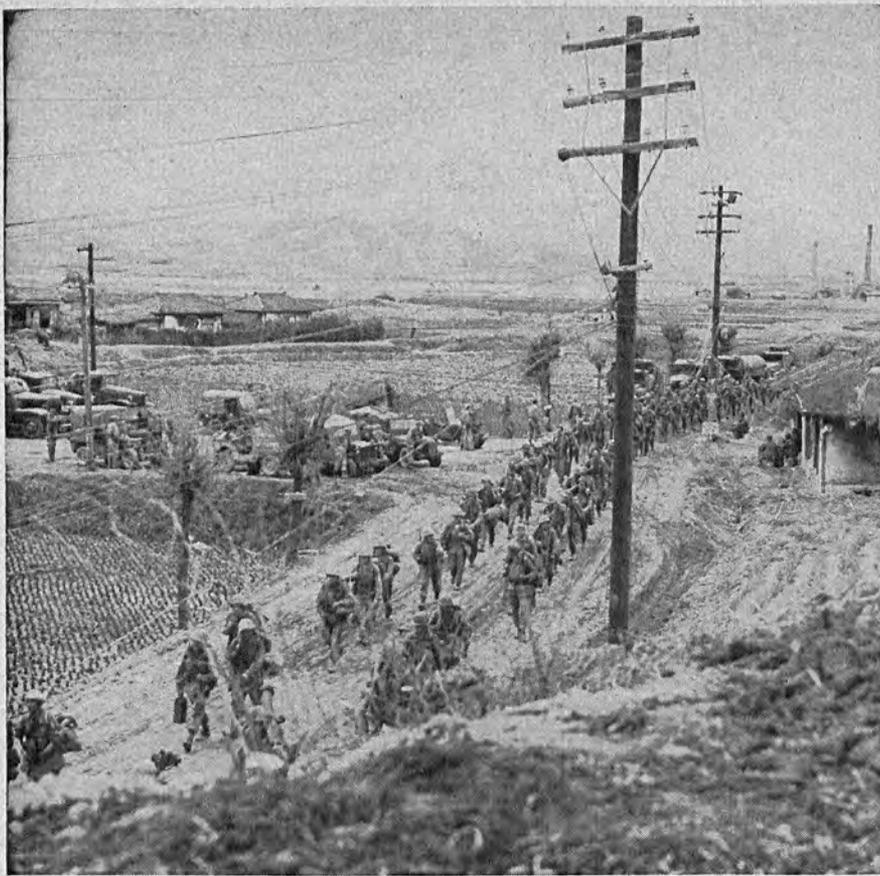
of 2/1, thus extending the defensive positions still farther southward. Here the Marine line was bent to resemble a fishhook with its shank to the north and the barb curving around to the west and south. This analogy may also have occurred to the enemy, for there were only cautious nibbles on the night of 24-25 April in the form of two light probing attacks. The fires of the 11th Marines were required, however, to break up attempted CCF concentrations in front of the positions held by RCT-1.

There was still some pressure on the left flank during the night of 25-26 April, but the 11th Marines continued to prevent the enemy from mounting a large-scale attack. On

the other side of the gap left by the CCF breakthrough, a U. S. infantry division also extended its vulnerable flank to the southward. These defensive measures enabled IX Corps to send up reserves, and on the 26th, Gen Van Fleet published an order on a change in strategy.

Ever since January the Eighth Army had been "rolling with the punches" to contain enemy counter-strokes—giving up ground while inflicting all possible damage. But this time the commanding general decided to break off contact and fall back as much as 20 miles in some sectors to a new defensive line. And though Seoul had not previously been considered of primary importance, Gen Van Fleet directed that





*The long walk back to new positions*

the river, and even to boost him occasionally while climbing hills. The poor fellow was apparently too exhausted to speak, and not until daybreak did the Leathernecks discover that they had been succoring a frightened Chinese straggler who infiltrated into their lines to give himself up. He was the single prisoner taken by the division that day.

By the morning of the 27th the first phase of the withdrawal had been completed. The second phase began the next day, but owing to a shortage of vehicles it was not until the morning of the 30th that the last unit of the 1st Mar Div took its assigned position on the new defensive line.

During the Marine operations of the past week, the entire UN front

it was to be defended and held.

All along the Eighth Army front the rearward movement began on the 25th. The 1st Mar Div was to withdraw in two stages—first, to positions covering Chunchon until service units could retire from that town; and, later, to the new defensive line. This meant that RCT-1 (with 3/7 attached) and RCT-5 were to be pulled back across the Pukhan River, while the KMC Regt on the right needed only to retire in zone.

The movement began at 1130 on 26 April without CCF interference. By 1900 all units except 2/1 and 3/7 were across the bridge, and the span was destroyed. These battalions forded the waist-deep stream in the darkness, crossing at 0230 and moving toward their new positions covering Chunchon.

It has always been a proud Marine tradition that a helpless comrade must not be neglected, and that night the men of 2/1 lent a supporting hand to a dim figure stumbling along in the darkness. It was necessary to hold him up while fording



had of course been struck by the CCF counter-offensive. The forward movement of the Eighth Army was stopped in its tracks on the night of the 22d, and some of the units did not weather the attacks of the next few days without losses both of territory and personnel.

The most dramatic of these reverses took place on the west central front. Both the British 29th Brigade and the Belgian battalion came under terrific pressure from Chinese forces attempting to cut off and surround UN units. The enemy found his opportunity when a battalion of the British 29th Brigade was left isolated in the confusion of a general withdrawal, ordered by Gen Van Fleet on 23 April, to prepared lines of defense. Cut off and surrounded,

played about 36 of them between Hwachon and the west coast and some 12 to 14 from Hwachon to the east coast. Reports had not erred, as events were to prove, in predicting that the chief CCF blow would be aimed at the Yangchon-Uijongbu-Seoul corridor in the west, with a diversionary effort being made in the east-central front. At first, it is true, the sudden success of the sideshow gave it the illusion of more importance than the main act. But the enemy profited little from his breakthrough, and by the 26th the east-central front was stabilized.

It was on this date that the main enemy effort revealed itself as an attempt to smash through and capture Seoul. CCF divisions closed in from two directions on Uijongbu, com-

by the end of the month it was apparent that the Communists would not celebrate May Day in Seoul.

Four days earlier the Chinese had shot their bolt on the east-central front, and a diversionary attack in ROK sectors to the east had resulted only in the capture of Inje. Thus the first phase of the CCF counter-offensive had failed to accomplish any of its announced aims, though UN estimates placed the enemy casualties as high as 70,000 during the seven days.

But this was only the first act. The Chinese were believed to have committed about half of their immediately available strength. Eighth Army staff officers concluded, therefore, that the lull at the end of April was temporary and would be followed by a renewal of the offensive. The enemy, in short, had fired only one barrel.

Seventeen CCF divisions were believed to be available for a second performance, and Gen Van Fleet called a conference of corps commanders at his CP on 30 April. Staff officers announced that the Eighth Army was planning to take a calculated risk by reorganizing tactical elements in preparation for the next enemy attempt.

After this reshuffling, the Eighth Army was to hold on its defensive line until the time came for striking again. Each corps would have its definite missions, and Gen Van Fleet enjoined them to "keep units intact. Small units must be kept within supporting distance."

It was the commanding general's intention to conduct an active and dynamic defense. He reiterated that he wanted more mines and tactical wire, covered by fire. "We must expend steel and fire," he declared, "not men. I want to stop the enemy here and hurt him." But he also directed that aggressive patrolling be conducted by tank-infantry teams for the purpose of unmasking the enemy's preparations.

On 1 May, after the reshuffling of units, the 1st Mar Div found itself back again in X Corps under LtGen Edward S. Almond. The transition had been simple. A left-flank battalion was relieved by a U. S. infantry division, so that this division could be placed in line on the Marine left and the corps boundary shifted westward. On the Marine right was another U. S. division.



Eastfoto

### *The enemy celebrated his initial success*

the 1st Bn of the Gloucesters fought on for 70 hours until supplies of food and water reached the vanishing point. When radios went dead and ammunition ran out, LtCol F. J. Carne, British Army, directed his survivors to scatter in small groups and try to make their way back to the UN lines. Only about 40 men succeeded after battling their way northward through enemy forces, then circling around to the south until they encountered a friendly armored column.

With an estimated 70 divisions south of the Yalu, the enemy de-

veloping elements of a U. S. infantry division to pull back to prepared positions about four miles north of the ROK capital.

The Chinese, it was believed, had set themselves the goal of sacking the city on May Day, the world-wide Communist holiday. In this aspiration they were destined to be disappointed. The enemy tried to work around the left flank by crossing the Han to the Kimpo Peninsula, but air strikes and potential naval gunfire quickly frustrated this maneuver. Another flanking attempt 35 miles to the southeast met repulse, and

The 1st Mar Div, as well as other Eighth Army units, soon began the preparation of defenses in depth—defenses bristling with mines, barbed wire entanglements, and meticulously plotted fields of fire. On 6 May, in response to corps orders, the Marines helped to patrol along the right boundary in conjunction with elements of the adjacent U. S. infantry division. RCT-7 was moved forward several miles for this purpose, and the 1st Bn of RCT-1 brought up from reserve to cover the resulting gap with patrols.

Patrolling went on vigorously along the entire 1st Mar Div front during the next ten days. Several of the larger tank-infantry teams penetrated as far as the Pukhan River, and Chunchon was entered without opposition. These actions confirmed the existence of a wide "no-man's-land," held by neither side in force, and the Leathernecks had only a few minor clashes with enemy groups.

The same situation prevailed over the entire Eighth Army front. Units from all three corps ranged forward as much as 15 kilometers with only negligible contacts.

Gen Van Fleet did not content himself with probing. For the purpose of coming to grips with the enemy as well as securing a supply route, he planned a limited offensive of the ROK Army to begin on 7 May. Navy forces on the east coast laid down a preliminary bombardment and simulated an amphibious assault on Kansong while the Fifth Air Force conducted strategic bombing missions. In conjunction with these attacks in the east, the 1st ROK Div of I Corps was directed to conduct a two-day reconnaissance in force along the west coast.

Both small-scale offensives exploded in the face of an enemy preparing for a renewal of his own offensive. The 1st ROK Div completed its mission on 9 May without discovering evidences of an enemy build-up. In the ROK sector, slow progress was made against delaying tactics; but coastal units went forward under cover of naval gunfire to capture Kansong on 9 May.

This was the day when Gen Van Fleet published his plan for a much more comprehensive drive. His purpose was to break up enemy preparations by threatening lines of communication and supply, and all three

U. S. corps were to push toward objectives just south of the 38th Parallel. Within the next few days, however, preparations for this operation were postponed because the massing of CCF troops indicated the possibility of an enemy offensive in the east instead of west. Further reports made it seem likely that this offensive might materialize within 72 hours, and the commanding general decided to stand along the defensive line.

It is never safe to under-rate an enemy, but Eighth Army staff officers apparently gave Chinese generals too much credit when they anticipated a bid for a decision in the west. True it was that the chances for a surprise or temporary success were perhaps better in the east, but the rugged and almost roadless terrain made it difficult to exploit a victory. This entire littoral, moreover, was dominated by UN sea power.

In spite of these handicaps, the enemy struck on the 16th to the east of the 1st Mar Div. Several CCF diversionary attacks were begun simultaneously in Eighth Army sectors to the west.

☛ THE MAIN BLOW was launched by an estimated 125,000 CCF troops in the Naepyeong-Inje-Nodong area. Six divisions attacked on a 20-mile front in the vicinity of Hangye to break through the lines of two ROK divisions. Pouring into this gap, the Communists made a maximum penetration of about 30 miles which exposed the right flank of the U. S. infantry division on the west.

Gen Van Fleet acted promptly to plug the gap. Immediately after the breakthrough, he sent another U. S. infantry division, then in reserve southwest of Seoul, on a 70-mile, all-night ride to the threatened area. The hard-pressed defenders were further aided by the 1st Mar Div, which had been on the receiving end of some of the first Communist attacks.

At 0300 on 17 May, the Chinese attempted to wipe out the perimeter and roadblock which had recently been set up by the reinforced 3d Bn of RCT-7. The enemy attacked in wave after wave with a wide variety of weapons—mortars, recoilless rifles, satchel charges, grenades, small arms, and automatic weapons.

These attacks were made with suicidal desperation. Chinese soldiers, two of them wearing U. S.

Marine uniforms, were killed after climbing onto the tanks of Dog Co, 1st Tank Bn, and shouting, "Tank, let me in!" One Marine tank was disabled by a hand grenade thrown into the engine compartment, and another damaged by a satchel charge. The enemy tried to disable a third tank by rolling up a drum of gasoline and igniting it, but the Marine crew pulled away.

The reinforced Marine battalion beat off the assaults of Chinese in estimated regimental strength, but it was a hard struggle resulting in grenade duels and hand-to-hand fighting. At 0630 the enemy attempted to withdraw, but the howitzers of the 11th Marines and the planes of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing had their turn. Enemy casualties were estimated at 350 killed (112 counted), 550 wounded, and 82 prisoners. The captured CCF weapons included recoilless rifles, mortars, and Russian machine guns.

On the 18th the 1st Mar Div, carrying out X Corps orders, began a maneuver designed to aid the U. S. division on the east by narrowing its front. RCT-7 was pulled back to relieve RCT-1, which side-slipped to the east to take over an area held by elements of the adjacent division. RCT-5 then swung around from the divisional left flank to the extreme right. These shifts enabled the other division to face east and repulse attacks on its flanks.

This was the climax. From 19 May onward it grew more apparent every hour that the second CCF counter-offensive had failed even more conclusively than the first. The enemy had only a narrow penetration on a secondary front to show for frightful casualties, and after four days his main attack had lost most of its momentum.

Worse yet, from the Chinese viewpoint, was the fact that the UN forces were in position to strike a return blow before the attackers recovered their tactical balance. The Eighth Army had emerged with comparatively light losses after taking every punch the attackers could throw, and now it was about to swing from the heels. Armored patrols sent out on the 20th and 21st found the Communists vulnerable in some areas, and next day the Eighth Army began a counter-attack which turned into a pursuit in some sectors of the front.

USMC

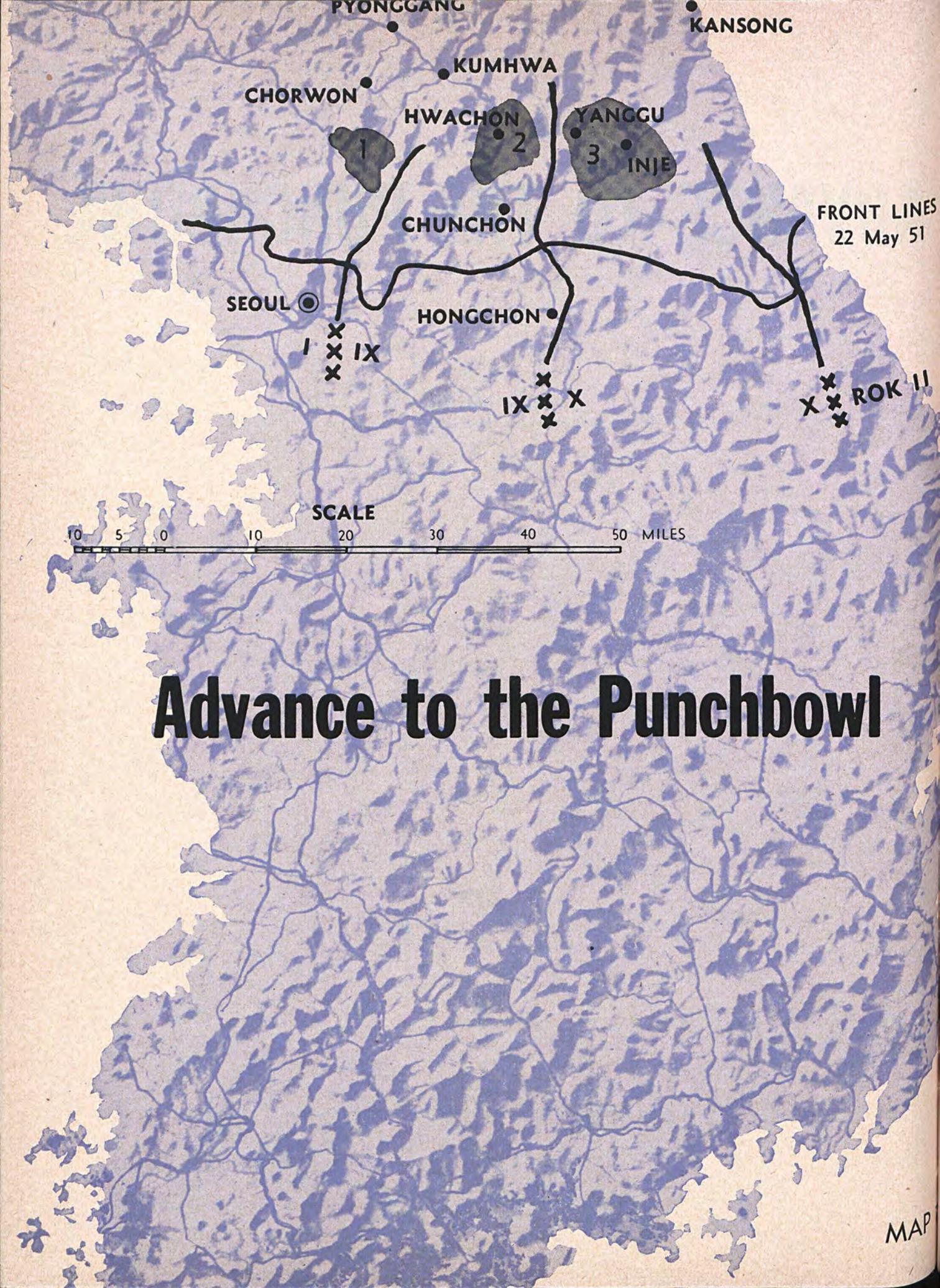
# ADVANCE TO THE PUNCHBOWL

*By Lynn Montross*

Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps



Reprinted from August 1953 issue of The Marine Corps Gazette



PYONGGANG

KANSONG

CHORWON

KUMHWA

HWACHON

YANGGU

INJE

CHUNCHON

FRONT LINES  
22 May 51

SEOUL

HONGCHON

X  
X IX  
X

IX X X X

X X X ROK II  
X

SCALE

10 5 0 10 20 30 40 50 MILES

# Advance to the Punchbowl

MAP

LATE IN MAY 1951 THE CHINESE Communist army in Korea might have been compared to a fighter who has left himself open after throwing two hard rights and failing to score a knockout. Both long-expected offensives had found the United Nations forces prepared to roll with the punches and pull back to lines of defense. Then, while the enemy was still off balance, the Eighth Army went in swinging with an offensive of its own in May and June which bagged a record-breaking number of Chinese prisoners.

The 1st Marine Division, of course, was in the thick of it. Leathernecks who took part will never forget the push from the Soyang River to the Punchbowl through some of the most forbidding mountain country in Korea. The fighting was savage at times, and one Marine regiment had more battle casualties in June 1951 than it suffered during the entire Chosin Reservoir breakout.

As a preliminary to these events, the first three and a half months of the year had been a period of almost continuous slugging. The trans-peninsular battle line swayed back and forth as the great CCF offensive of January was followed by a series of UN drives. These limited-objective offensives were planned less for the purpose of gaining ground than disrupting Chinese preparations for a new all-out attack. Even so, the Eighth Army advanced more than 50 kilometers during the early spring months to occupy a line north of the 38th parallel.

The first step of the CCF "Fifth Phase Offensive" was launched on 22 April. LtGen James A. Van Fleet, CG Eighth Army, gave up ground rather than men and material when the enemy pressure became too heavy. Withdrawing when necessary, UN forces inflicted an estimated 70,000 casualties on the Communists within a week. The CCF drive was brought to a standstill by the 28th, and the Eighth Army resumed its limited-objective offensives.

Unprecedented numbers of enemy vehicles were sighted early in May by our tactical air during hours of darkness, indicating that the Chinese would soon try again. Their next blow fell May 16th. Again the attackers made local gains at a heavy

price in blood. But the new CCF effort was stopped in five days, leaving the enemy vulnerable to UN counter-attack in east and east-central Korea.

The enemy, in fact, had blundered into the trap he had set all spring for elements of the Eighth Army. For weeks he had made withdrawals in the hope of luring our forces into an over-extended position where they would be open to assault. But on 20 May the Chinese found themselves in this predicament as the second installment of their Fifth Phase Offensive ground to a halt with few of its objectives attained. It was the turn of the Eighth Army now, and the opportunity did not go begging.

On 21 May, therefore, General Van Fleet ordered the first of the UN attacks which continued without many intermissions throughout the following month.

At this time the 1st Mar Div held a sector of X Corps in the Hongchon area of east-central Korea. The Leathernecks had been in the line since January, taking part with scarcely a breathing spell in all Eighth Army operations, both offensive and defensive, which involved their part of the front. MajGen Gerald C. Thomas was the new commanding general, having relieved MajGen Oliver P. Smith in April, and a good many veterans of Inchon-Seoul and the Chosin Reservoir had already been rotated back to the States. Hundreds of new faces were to be seen, ranging from Pfc to colonels, but it was the same old outfit when it came to fitness.

The destruction of CCF personnel and equipment while keeping the enemy off balance—these were the purposes of the trans-peninsular attack directed by CG, Eighth Army on 21 May. All three U. S. corps were to advance, each being assigned an objective which included key enemy communication and supply centers just north of the 38th parallel (Map 1, page 14). The objectives were as follows:

Objective No. 1 (I Corps), the Yongpyong-Mansedari area;

Objective No. 2 (IX Corps), the Hwachon area;

Objective No. 3 (X Corps), the Yanggu-Inje area.

By Lynn Montross

In cooperation with the Historical Branch, G-3, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, the GAZETTE herewith presents another in a series of official accounts dealing with Marine operations in Korea. Prepared by writers and researchers of the Historical Branch, these articles have been based on available records and reports from units in Korea.

Admittedly it is too soon to write a definitive history of Marine fighting in Korea. Not only are enemy sources lacking, but even Marine and Army records are still incomplete. Articles of the length to be used in the GAZETTE, moreover, do not allow space for more than an outline of operations which will ultimately be given the detailed treatment of a monograph.

But timeliness is also an end to be sought, and these preliminary narratives have been based on Marine and Army reports received up to this time.

It was on the X Corps front, however, that the Eighth Army command expected to hit the enemy the hardest. This had been the locale of the CCF offensive just ended, and here the enemy was open to a counter-stroke. The Chinese were particularly over-extended to the east of the Hwachon Reservoir area, and General Van Fleet shifted the boundary between the two corps to expedite the capture of large enemy forces. This change gave IX Corps the responsibility for the western third of the reservoir area, while X Corps was assigned the eastern two-thirds.

All four Marine infantry regiments had been in line abreast—from left to right, the 1st KMC, 7th, 1st and 5th Regts—when a X Corps operational order of 22 May called for a preliminary advance. The 1st Mar Div, on the extreme left, was to support the attack on its right of the 187th Airborne RCT, recently attached to X Corps. On the afternoon of the 22d the Marines pushed forward a maximum of 4,000 yards against very light resistance, carrying out a readjustment of positions in preparation for the next day's attack.

The X Corps part of the great UN counter-stroke began in earnest the next day as the commanding general, LtGen Edward M. Almond, ordered a general advance toward the line of the Soyang River. The shift in the boundary between IX

and X Corps had resulted in the former taking over half of the 1st Mar Div zone. This adjustment enabled the KMC and 7th Regiments to be placed in reserve while the 1st advanced on the left of the 5th.

Mountains were no novelty to Marines with Korean experience but they had seldom seen as chaotic a landscape as the one stretching ahead. Peaks of 3,000 feet brooded over a wilderness of seemingly vertical ridges rising from dark and narrow valleys. Few roads were available and the frequent spring rains turned these native trails into bogs.

The two chief terrain features of the 1st Mar Div sector were the

### *On to the Soyang*



Hwachon Reservoir, some nine miles from the LD, and the Soyang River, about halfway between the two. Yanggu, the only town of note, lay at the eastern tip of the reservoir in a comparatively flat and fertile valley. Two lesser streams, tributaries of the Soyang, formed a natural north-south corridor for the Marine advance.

So light was the resistance put up by scattered and disorganized enemy groups that the two attacking Marine regiments often had more trouble with the terrain. The Leathernecks of 2/5 were not much impressed by CCF psychological warfare, therefore, when an enemy plane urged them by loud speaker to go home to their wives and children.<sup>1</sup> This suggestion might have

<sup>1</sup>This incident, reported by the 5th Marines, is the first of the sort to be mentioned in field reports by Marine units in Korea.

had more appeal to the Chinese themselves, since CCF prisoners reported that retreating units were being pounded by UN air and artillery. Food and ammunition shortages were hampering the enemy withdrawal, and the Marines could attest that large quantities of CCF weapons and supplies had been abandoned in the haste of retirement.

The period from the 22d to the 25th may be considered a first phase which X Corps units devoted largely to regrouping. For it must be remembered that the CCF offensive had scarcely been stopped when X Corps struck back in combination with attacks of I and IX Corps in west and central Korea. The two Marine regiments were able to advance almost at will, though the 7th Marines had a brisk fight on the 25th. This regiment had been designated to support a 2d Inf Div task force of RCT size in a plan to seize a bridgehead over the Soyang. But the Leathernecks soon ran into an enemy battalion dug in along the high ground between two hills. Advancing in the teeth of small arms and automatic fire, 3/7 drove the enemy from the position, and next day the regiment secured its objectives.

The second phase of the X Corps counter-stroke, known as the Battle of the Soyang, began on 27 May and

lasted until 3 June. Although attacks were made by all three corps, the great object was to cut off enemy forces in the X Corps zone between the east coast and the Hwachon Reservoir.

In this area the attack was essentially a pincers movement to envelop an enemy making a desperate effort to escape toward the northwest. The plan of maneuver called for the 1st Mar Div on the left to drive northward and seize the Yanggu area. In the center the 2d Inf Div (with the 5th ROK Div attached) was to advance toward the northeast and secure the Inje-Hyonni area, so as to prevent enemy movement north of the Inje-Kansong road. On the right the 3d Inf Div (attached to X Corps during the recent CCF offensive) had the mission of advancing, along with the 9th ROK Div and a regiment of the 8th ROK Div, to destroy the enemy in the eastern part of the corps zone. As a final thrust, the 187th RCT (reinforced with ROK units) was to slice through from the new Soyang bridgehead to seize Kansong on the east coast with the aid of naval gunfire and seaborne supplies. This plan was later amended, however, so that the objective of the 187th was the high ground dominating Inje.

So fluid was the situation that



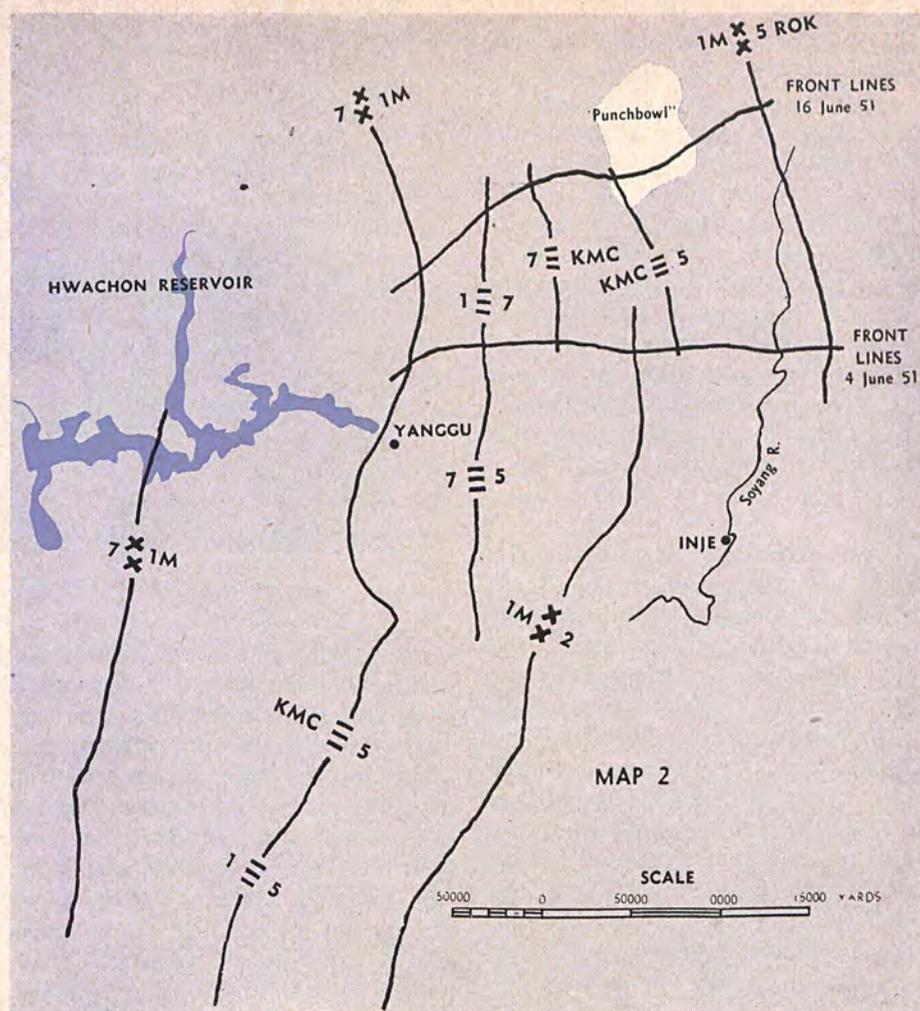
*The stacks of captured weapons grew*

memories of Inchon-Seoul were revived at this time when the Eighth Army command planned a new amphibious operation to be executed by the 1st Mar Div on 6 June. The objective was to have been Tongchon, only a few miles south of Kojo, where the Leathernecks had their first fights after the Wonsan landing of October 1950. Plans for the Tongchon assault called for a drive southward by the 1st Mar Div along the Tongchon-Kumhwa road to link up with IX Corps elements attacking toward the northeast. It is anybody's guess what the result might have been, however, since the Eighth Army abandoned the plan on the following day.

As it was, the 1st Mar Div found itself committed on 27 May to the attack on Yanggu, with the 7th Marines advancing on the left of the Honchon-Inje Road and the 5th Marines on the right along the ridge-lines. The 1st Marines was in division reserve, and on the extreme division left the 1st KMC Regt was able to cover the area south of the Hwachon Reservoir with patrols, since the enemy was not defending in force.

Glancing first at the "big picture," it is apparent that the double-barreled CCF spring offensive had backfired. Never since crossing the Yalu, in fact, had the Chinese been hit so hard as during the last few days of May. Enemy casualties from the 15th to the 31st were estimated by the Eighth Army at 105,000. This figure included 17,000 counted dead and the unprecedented total of 10,000 prisoners, most of them Chinese Communists taken during the final week of May in frantic efforts to withdraw. In extreme instances the enemy was so demoralized that remnants of companies and even battalions gave up without a fight, while enormous quantities of weapons and supplies were captured by the advancing UN forces. Such results were a vast departure from past operations in which the Chinese had preferred death to surrender.

This does not mean that the enemy was crushed, however, or that he failed to extricate the bulk of his forces, even though the cost in casualties came high. For if some routed groups surrendered, others put up an almost suicidal resistance



to keep the rear areas open for escape. This was especially true of the North Koreans, who set an example for the Chinese when it came to stubborn delaying actions.

It fell to the lot of the 1st Mar Div to encounter several of these expendable NK units, so that the attack on Yanggu occasionally ran into difficulties. Nevertheless, both the 5th and 7th Marines advanced 4,000 meters on the 28th against light to moderate resistance, while the KMCs continued to patrol on the division left flank with few contacts.

Never before had such large enemy concentrations been sighted in broad daylight as those retreating to the northwest across the X Corps front. These withdrawals were made possible by NK troops sacrificed in delaying actions such as the all-day fight which held up the 5th and 7th Marines on 29 May. The encounter lasted from early morning until 1600, with the North Koreans putting up a resistance described as "fanatical" by Marine field reports. They were

dug in along a ridge with mortars and automatic weapons, and their positions had to be overrun by direct assault. At the finish, only some 400 were left to be flushed out, about half of them being killed while retreating by the artillery of the 3d Bn, 11th Marines.

☛ LIGHT TO MODERATE resistance awaited the 1st Mar Div on the 30th as the 5th and 7th Marines continued to advance while the other two infantry regiments sent out patrols—the KMCs on the left, and the 1st Marines in reserve. And on the last day of May the 7th Marines pushed forward a tank-infantry patrol which reached the high ground overlooking Yanggu from the east. This meant that all scattered enemy groups to the south of the Hwachon Reservoir were now sealed off, though most of them had already been rounded up by UN forces advancing on the left of the 1st Mar Div.

Enemy resistance stiffened in the

path of the 1st Mar Div as the battle of the Soyang approached an end during the first three days of June. A fairly typical Marine action of this period, showing the use made of supporting arms, was the assault of 2 June on Hill 610 by the 1st Bn of the 5th Marines. This terrain feature was the key to the maze of razor-back ridges rising abruptly from the valley of a small stream which flowed southward several miles to empty into a horseshoe loop of the Soyang. The hills were wooded in this area, and the rice paddies of the narrow valleys had been turned into bogs by recent downpours.

It was formidable terrain and the enemy had made good use of its defensive advantages. Bunkers constructed of 10-inch logs gave overhead protection to tough NK defenders supported by automatic weapons and 82mm mortars. The Marine attack got under way at 0915. After two four-plane strikes by VMF-214 and a preparation by 1/11 and the 1st Rocket Btry, Charlie Co jumped off from the heights on the friendly side of the valley. Able Co followed and Baker advanced in support along a ridge to the south.

The enemy opened up immediately with a heavy concentration of



*Artillery and rockets pinpointed enemy positions*

Koreans resisted to the death in their bunkers, but Marine supporting arms poured in a devastating fire of rockets, artillery and 81mm or 4.2-inch mortars. The distinctive feature of the attack, however, was the close cooperation between tanks and infantry. While Charlie and Able Cos mopped up along the ridge, Marine tanks paralleled the advance on the valley floor to provide flat-trajectory 90mm fire on the bunkers.

It took until late afternoon for the Marine infantry to secure the entire ridge up to the foot of Hill 610. At the climax of the assault, VMF-214 contributed another four-plane strike and the 1st Bn of the 11th Marines scorched the height with artillery. But there were still about 250 North Koreans entrenched on the summit with mortars, automatic weapons and grenades. They fought it out to the bitter end, and not until dusk did Charlie Company overrun the last bunker as Able Co moved up to tie in for the night.

The assault on Hill 610 will never have its glorious page in history. It was all in the day's work for Leathernecks who could expect a succession of such nameless battles as they slugged their way forward. That night the weary men of Charlie and Able Cos were not surprised to receive a counter-attack in the darkness—it was all in the day's work, too. After driving off an unseen enemy, the new tenants of Hill 610 snatched a few hours of rest. Then they were on their feet again at dawn, ready to go up against the



*Each position demolished*

next key terrain feature in an area which seemed to be composed entirely of Hill 610s.

On 3 June, when the battle of the Soyang ended in the zone of X Corps, the participating Army and Marine units had secured their main objectives of the Inje and Yanggu areas. And if the modified pincers movement had been only partly successful, the opposition of weather and terrain could be blamed as well as enemy delaying operations. But even though the bulk of the CCF forces had managed to pull out, X Corps units took hundreds of prisoners and drove more hundreds into the path of other UN units. Enemy losses from UN artillery or



*The big guns came through*

mortar fire, but the Marines plugged ahead with the support of their own mortars and the 50-cal machine guns of a platoon of C Co, 1st Tank Bn. By 1030 the infantry had secured the opposite ridge and continued the attack along the ridge to the north which led to Hill 610. The North

air strikes were tremendous, moreover, as the retreating columns provided targets in daylight hours.

The finish of the battle did not mean that X Corps paused to rest or that the other two Eighth Army corps stopped after taking their objectives. On 4 June the trans-peninsular advance continued against opposition which stiffened daily as the enemy reacted to growing pressure on his sensitive "Iron Triangle" assembly area—the CCF transportation and supply center bounded by the towns of Chorwon, Kumhwa and Pyonggang (Map 1).

It was a smaller X Corps which began the next phase. The 3d Inf Div had reverted to the control of I Corps in west Korea, and the 187th

Corps extended his congratulations to officers and men of the 1st Mar Div for the aggressiveness of their drive across the Soyang and capture of Yanggu. "You have denied [the enemy] the opportunity of regrouping his forces," said General Almond's message, "and forced him into a hasty retreat. The destruction of enemy forces and material has been tremendous and many times greater than our own losses. This splendid effort adds another glorious page to the history of the United States Marine Corps."

Seldom had a relieving outfit been given a hotter reception than the 1st Marines on 2 June, when moving up to the left of the 5th Marines. On the way to the LD near Yanggu, the 3d Bn had 52 men killed and wounded by enemy mortar fire. Among these casualties were four company commanders, the artillery liaison officer, two forward observers, the S-3, the medical officer and several veteran NCOs. A reorganization was made necessary before the attack scheduled for the following morning could jump off.

laying action during this period.

An increase in enemy artillery as well as mortar fire was also evident as X Corps attacked with a mission of securing a new phase line to the northward. The obstinacy of NK resistance soon led to further adjustments in the 1st Mar Div zone. After a brief period in reserve, the 1st KMC Regt relieved the 5th Marines and immediately attacked against stubborn opposition. Meanwhile the 5th Marines moved by foot and truck to an assembly area in preparation for relieving elements of the 2d Inf Div on the right of the KMCs.

☛ FROM 4 TO 7 JUNE, therefore, the 1st Mar Div was advancing with three regiments abreast. (Map 2, page 17.) And on the following day, the 7th Marines (less the 3d Bn, which remained in reserve) was assigned a fourth regimental sector between the 1st Marines and the KMC Regt.

There was no easy or painless way of driving out North Koreans protected by log bunkers and supported by heavy, accurate concentrations of mortar and artillery fire. Maneuver



assault

Airborne RCT had gone into corps reserve, though still attached to the 2d Inf Div. The 8th ROK Div took over the former 3d Inf Div sector to the right of the 2d Inf Div, and the 7th ROK Div was given the responsibility for rear-area security. On the corps left the 1st Mar Div advanced northward from an LD in the Yanggu area. The 1st Marines relieved the 7th, which went into division reserve along with the 1st KMC Regt. The latter had been relieved by elements of the 7th ROK Div after the KMC sector was pinched out as the result of a new 1st Mar Div boundary extended to the eastward by corps order.

As the new phase began, CG X



*"Death before surrender" went by the board*

Enemy units in contact with the 1st Mar Div were identified as elements of the Twelfth CCF Army and 5th NK Corps. It was apparent, however, that Chinese forces were rapidly being relieved by NK units which had the responsibility for de-

was out of the question in a terrain of ridges rising like walls from the canyon-like valleys. Each enemy position in turn had to be taken by direct assault, with the infantry depending on the support of air, armor, artillery, mortars and rockets.

From 3 to 6 June the two assault battalions of the 1st Marines attacked by day and repulsed NK probing attacks by night. Assigned objectives were taken on the 6th after a final assault aided by air strikes and 6,500 rounds of artillery as well as 452 rounds of 4.2-inch projectiles. On the other hand, it was estimated that enemy mortar and artillery fire on regimental front-line positions averaged one round every two minutes at its peak.

Meanwhile, the KMCs on the right were having a terrific fight. For 52 hours the regiment had been in continual assault on a bare, razor-backed ridge defended by enemy mine fields as well as automatic weapons, mortars and artillery. The 1st Bn reached the crest on 6 June only to be driven back by a savage enemy counter-attack. But the Korean Marines clawed their way back up the slope again and penetrated within 100 yards of the summit before digging in at midnight. The day's toll of 92 battle casualties, suffered chiefly by the 1st Bn, testifies as to the intensity of the struggle.

This regiment was meeting the toughest resistance of all in its assault on Division Objective Able, comprising the steep ridgelines running north to the jagged Tabam-San range. The enemy had dug in along the sharp heights with log bunkers and mortar or machine-gun emplacements while mining the valleys which channelized our attack.

NOT ONLY DID the KMCs have the hardest sector at this stage of events, but they could expect precious little mercy from their Communist countrymen. The bodies of 10 men reported MIA on 6 June, for instance, were found three days later on the reverse slope of a captured ridge. All had been shot by the North Koreans.

The KMC assault on Objective Able continued almost without interruption for five more days. It would hardly be an over-statement to say that the KMCs had to fight for every yard of stony ridgeline. With the main effort of the 1st Mar Div being concentrated in this sector, priority for close air support was given to the KMC Regt on 7 and 8 June. More than 200 NK dead were counted on the crest of one battalion objective,

and enemy prisoners reported that they had been ordered to "defend to the last man."

Fog and mist blanketed the two-day attack of the 3d Bn on Hill 1186. Three times on 7 June the KMCs neared the top, only to be forced back by withering small arms and automatic fire from enemy bunkers, followed by grenades at close range. At 2100 the battalion knocked off for the night and resumed the attack at daybreak with effective close air support. Early in the afternoon the 3d Bn at last over-ran the sum-



mit. In addition to the 115 counted dead on the crest, about a hundred more were reported by a prisoner to have been buried the day before.

The two other battalions were meanwhile engaged in similar struggles. If the 1st KMC Regt had not already won the respect of every Marine in the division, the fight for Objective Able would have established its reputation for grit. For the assault continued doggedly on the 9th in spite of NK counter-attacks under cover of the fog. Two four-plane strikes and a mortar and artillery barrage preceded the attack of the 1st Bn that morning, but the men were thrown back repeatedly by enemy automatic and mortar fire from the ridge.

The fog was so dense on the 10th as to limit visibility to less than 50 yards. But in the early morning hours of 11 June, the 1st KMC Regt sprang a decisive surprise. The enemy had apparently grown too accustomed to thinking that night attacks were his own special prerogative. At any rate, the NK defenders of Hill 1222 were taken unaware in the darkness and routed by the 3d

Bn at 0200. Hill 1122, which had repulsed all KMC attempts of the last four days, was being seized meanwhile by the 2d Bn.

This night surprise broke the back of enemy resistance on Division Objective Able, and on the following day the remaining enemy positions were secured. The main NK force was observed in the act of retreating from Hill 1316, and three Marine air strikes were called on the position before the KMCs advanced. As a departure from the heavy losses of the past week, only three casualties were reported by the regiment that day.

All four infantry regiments of the 1st Mar Div had been attacking throughout the last four days—the 1st, 7th, KMC and 5th Regts in line from left to right. The 7th (less the 3d Bn) sent out a tank-infantry patrol on 8 June, after taking over its new sector, and next morning the two battalions jumped off toward Division Objective Dog. Heavy artillery and mortar fire slowed up the advance, not to mention the booby-trapped bangalores and box-type mines containing TNT. But the ground resistance was light to moderate, and the 7th Marines plugged steadily ahead.

During this period the 1st Marines was attacking toward Division Objectives Baker and Dog. Average gains of 2,000 yards were made on the 9th, when the advance was delayed until the 7th ROK Div caught up along the left flank. Major elements of three NK regiments opposed the attacks launched by the 1st





**Two battalions jumped off for Objective Dog**

Marines on the 10th. Sixteen Corsairs delivered rockets, napalm and strafing runs on enemy troops while Marine artillery, armor and mortars supported the infantry assault on Hills 676 and 700, the key positions. At the finish, with these objectives secured, the counted enemy dead totaled 160, and further NK casualties were estimated at 160 KIA and 350 WIA.

The 5th Marines, after taking over part of the 2d Inf Div zone on 5 June, attacked on the division right flank toward Objective Baker. Opposition was comparatively light at first, but from the 8th to 12th this regiment had its share of the heavy

toll



resistance encountered along the entire division front.

During the first 10 days of June, in fact, 1st Mar Div personnel losses were higher than during any full month of the year so far. The 1st KMC Regt suffered more than 500 casualties from all causes during this period, and the 1st Marines had 67 KIA and 1,044 WIA from 1 to 30 June, most of them being incurred during the first two weeks. This was a higher total of battle casualties than that reported by the regiment in the Chosin Reservoir operation.

An unusually large proportion of the friendly casualties occurred in rear areas as the result of observed NK mortar and artillery fire. Enemy mines also caused a good deal of damage to equipment as well as personnel, and 10 tanks were put out of commission within a week in the sector of the 7th Marines alone.

But the enemy paid dearly. As one instance, the 6th NK Division, opposing the 1st Marines, was punished so severely that the remnants eventually had to be withdrawn from the line and absorbed by another NK division. Total enemy losses for June in the zone of the 1st Mar Div were 2,672 counted and 2,525 estimated KIA, 5,559 estimated WIA and 760 prisoners.

By 13 June the 1st, 7th and KMC Regts had secured most of their objectives along the line designated

as the X Corps final objective. The 5th Marines continued to attack against resistance ranging from moderate to heavy, and there was no slackening in the enemy mortar and artillery fire which made it difficult to improve defensive positions in other sectors.

Several more hard fights remained for the infantry before the offensive phase ended. The 1st KMC Regt launched another night surprise at 0300 on 18 June to seize a peak known as Tusol-San. And the 5th Marines continued to attack in a terrain of knife-like ridges. By the 20th, however, the 1st Mar Div occupied all of its positions along the X Corps objective line, and the 7th Marines went into reserve after being relieved by elements of the 1st and KMC Regts.

The defensive phase began the next day with the 1st, KMC and 5th Regts in line from left to right along the southern rim of that circular, mountain-rimmed valley known as the Punchbowl. On the 23d, the 3d Bn of the 7th Marines occupied positions on the left of the division sector while the other two battalions remained in reserve. Tenth Corps orders called for aggressive patrolling, the maintenance of contact with the enemy and the employment of artillery and air strikes to inflict maximum losses. Marine patrols had an occasional fire fight, and light NK probing attacks were received now and then by defensive positions. But all units of X Corps (less the 187th RCT, recently detached and sent to Japan) were soon entrenched along the designated defense line behind many miles of barbed wire, and thousands of mines were being laid across the front.

Marine infantry has seldom if ever been called upon for harder and more sustained efforts than the attacks beginning on 22 May and continuing with few and brief interludes for a month. The ground forces cannot be given too much credit, but they would have been first to acknowledge their debt to supporting arms in general and Marine air in particular.

In May the air task organization consisted of VMF-214, VMF-323 and VMF(N)-513, flying from Pusan, VMF-212 and VMF-311 from Pohang and VMF-312 aboard the *Bataan*.

Late in May a move to Forward Airstrip K-46 at Hoengsong was begun by VMF-214, followed in June by elements of VMF-312 while VMF-323 went aboard the *Sicily*. All combat operations were under the control of the 5th Air Force at its JOC headquarters at Seoul. As a result of an informal agreement, the 5th Air Force designated the Marine aircraft at K-46 to provide close support for the 1st Mar Div, an arrangement which was to continue until 13 July, when K-46 was closed for repairs. Never was better close air support given under difficult weather and terrain conditions, and VMF-214 set a record for an outfit its size on 2 June with 52 combat sorties by nine pilots and 18 aircraft.

While X Corps was driving to the Punchbowl, other major Eighth Army units also gained ground. Perhaps the major effort was made by I Corps in its attack on the Iron Triangle. Units of two U. S. infantry divisions fought their way through extensive mine fields into Chorwon and Kumhwa on 8 June, inflicting losses on the enemy which were estimated at 40,000 casualties. Tank-infantry patrols drove north-

ward to Pyonggang, but were forced by enemy counter-attacks to withdraw on the 17th. By the end of June, however, I Corps held defensive positions extending about halfway between the base and apex of the strategic triangle which had been the enemy's main troop and supply center for his spring offensives.

On the east-central front, units of IX Corps pushed within 10 miles of Kumsong while I ROK Corps advanced along the east coast to Chodo-ri. Thus the UN forces occupied the most favorable line they had held since the great CCF offensive of January. From the mouth of the Imjin this line ran northeast to the middle of the Iron Triangle, eastward across the mountains to the southern rim of the Punchbowl, then northeast to the coast at Chodo-ri.

This was the situation on 25 June 1951. It is not likely that the date meant much to the mud-stained men in the line, though some may have recalled that it was the anniversary of the Communist aggression which started the war. There had been American reverses during the early months as the penalty of military

unpreparedness. But at the end of this first year, Americans could take pride in a tremendous military effort against the forces of world Communism—those swarming thousands of expendable Asiatic coolies secretly armed and supplied with the military resources of the USSR.

On 25 June 1951, the Communists held 2,100 square miles less territory than when they began their aggression with an overwhelming superiority in arms and trained men. By the most conservative estimate considerably more than a million Chinese and North Koreans had been killed, wounded or captured, and losses of enemy equipment included



### *A new assembly area in X Corps reserve*



391 aircraft, 1,000 pieces of artillery and thousands of automatic weapons, machine guns and mortars. North Korea, which had been the industrial region of the peninsula, lay in ruins everywhere, its cities and factories and power plants pounded into rubble by UN bombs and shells.

THE DEMOCRATIC nations of the world had been aroused to organize and fight against Communism. Twenty-one members of the United Nations were participating in or supporting military operations in Korea at the end of the first year—Australia, Belgium, Canada, Columbia, Denmark, Ethiopia, France, India, Greece, Korea, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, the Philippines, South Africa, Sweden, Thailand, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Of the 315,000 officers and enlisted men of the UN ground forces about 244,000 were included in U.S. units which were reinforced by 12,000 Koreans. ROK troops numbered

about 132,000, and military forces of other UN members added 27,000 to the total.

The enemy had not yet been

last two weeks on 7 July, when a division warning order was issued to all units to be prepared for relief on 15-17 July by the 2d Inf Div.

jective could be taken in a coordinated attack, but that energetic patrolling from advanced positions should fulfill all X Corps requirements for a patrol base.

Although the fighting had not been severe as compared to the preceding month, 1st Mar Div casualties for July (including the KMC losses) amounted to a total of 437—55 KIA, 360 WIA and 22 MIA. Relief of the division began on the 15th, and by the 17th all units were on their way to new assembly areas in X Corps reserve. It was the second time since the Leathernecks landed on 2 August 1950 that they had been away from the firing line in Korea.

A total of nearly 50,000 Marines had served so far in the conflict. Of this number, 1,385 casualties had been returned to the U. S. for hospitalization, 80 reserves sent home for release and 7,352 men rotated back for stateside duty. Following the Chosin Reservoir breakout, the casualty-thinned division had been pulled back into Eighth Army reserve in South Korea for several weeks during the winter of 1950-1951. This interlude and the few summer weeks in 1951 were to be the only breathing spells enjoyed by the 1st Mar Div until it was relieved again in May 1953 after two years and nine months of almost continual combat.

The first anniversary of the landing in Korea found the division under the operational control of X Corps in the assembly areas of Hongchon, Yanggu and Inje. But this does not mean that the Marines paused on 2 August to commemorate the occasion with reviews and band music. The Marines were too busy, training an average of 120 strenuous hours a week, and getting ready to return to the front and begin their second year of operations. USMC



*Kaesong—the first of many*

beaten in June 1951, but it would appear that he had good military as well as political reasons for desiring a breathing spell. In a New York radio address, a proposal for truce talks was made on the 23d by Jacob A. Malik, Foreign Minister of the USSR. Two days later the suggestion was unofficially endorsed in a broadcast by the Chinese Communist government, and UN officials immediately indicated their willingness to discuss preliminary terms. Finally, it was agreed that representatives of both sides would meet 7 July at Kaesong, just behind the Communist lines.

The war went on, of course, during the two weeks of negotiations following Malik's original proposal. Limited-objective attacks were launched in sectors of the I and IX Corps fronts, and X Corps tank-infantry patrols had a few clashes with the enemy. But the Marines were occupying the same positions of the

The guns did not fall silent even when the Kaesong truce talks began. On the contrary, Marine units repulsed several enemy probing attacks during the last week in the lines, and Marine patrols ranged 6,000 meters north of the MLR. On 7 July, moreover, X Corps directed the 1st Mar Div to pursue two courses of action:

(1) the completion of secondary defensive positions, employing the 103d Korean Service Division for this purpose;

(2) the establishment of a patrol base forward of the MLR.

On the 8th the 1st KMC Regt began a four-day attack to the northward through heavily mined and booby-trapped areas to seize a patrol base. The assault had penetrated within 1,300 meters of its objective when the 1st Mar Div command informed X Corps that the two MLRs were in sufficiently close contact. It was further asserted that the ob-



# FLYING WINDMILLS IN KOREA

*By Lynn Montross*

Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps





## By Lynn Montross

THE MARINES HAD BEEN IN Korea less than 24 hours when the helicopter got into action. On 2 August 1950, the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade landed at Pusan. And early the next morning the commanding general, BrigGen Edward A. Craig, made a reconnaissance flight in an HO3S-1 of Marine Observation Squadron 6.

This flight marked the dawn of a new day in command relations. Thanks to the helicopter, a general and his staff could now maintain a direct physical contact with operations at the front such as had never been possible before. Not only was vertical flight an aid to reconnaissance, but it enabled a commander to keep in personal touch with his units, since the helicopter could land practically anywhere without asking favors from the terrain. Thus the brain of the military body was given a closer and more immediate degree of control over the muscles and sinews.

This was one of the results of the studies and tests begun in 1946, when the United States Marine Corps took the lead in the development of helicopter combat techniques. The Marine Corps Schools at Quantico served as the tactical laboratory. Again history had repeated itself, for it was in those red brick buildings at Quantico that Marine officers of the 1920s set them-

In cooperation with the Historical Branch, G-3, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, the GAZETTE herewith presents the last in a series of official accounts dealing with Marine operations in Korea. Prepared by writers and researchers of the Historical Branch, these articles have been based on available records and reports from units in Korea.

Admittedly it is too soon to write a definitive history of Marine fighting in Korea. Not only are enemy sources lacking, but even Marine and Army records are still incomplete. Articles of the length to be used in the GAZETTE, moreover, do not allow space for more than an outline of operations which will ultimately be given the detailed treatment of a monograph.

But timeliness is also an end to be sought, thus these preliminary narratives have been based on Marine and Army reports received up to this time.

selves the task of creating a new system of amphibious warfare. And now, after a second World War, the sons of those officers had the problem of rejuvenating that system with new combat techniques made possible by vertical flight.

The two long-range projects had a good deal in common. Both were conceived in an hour of widespread pessimism as to the future of amphibious warfare. In the early 1920s the battleship sinkings and troop repulses of Gallipoli had convinced Europe's admirals and generals that such an assault could never prevail against modern firepower. And in the late 1940s a new generation of skeptics insisted that the atomic bomb doomed the ship-to-shore attack to failure.

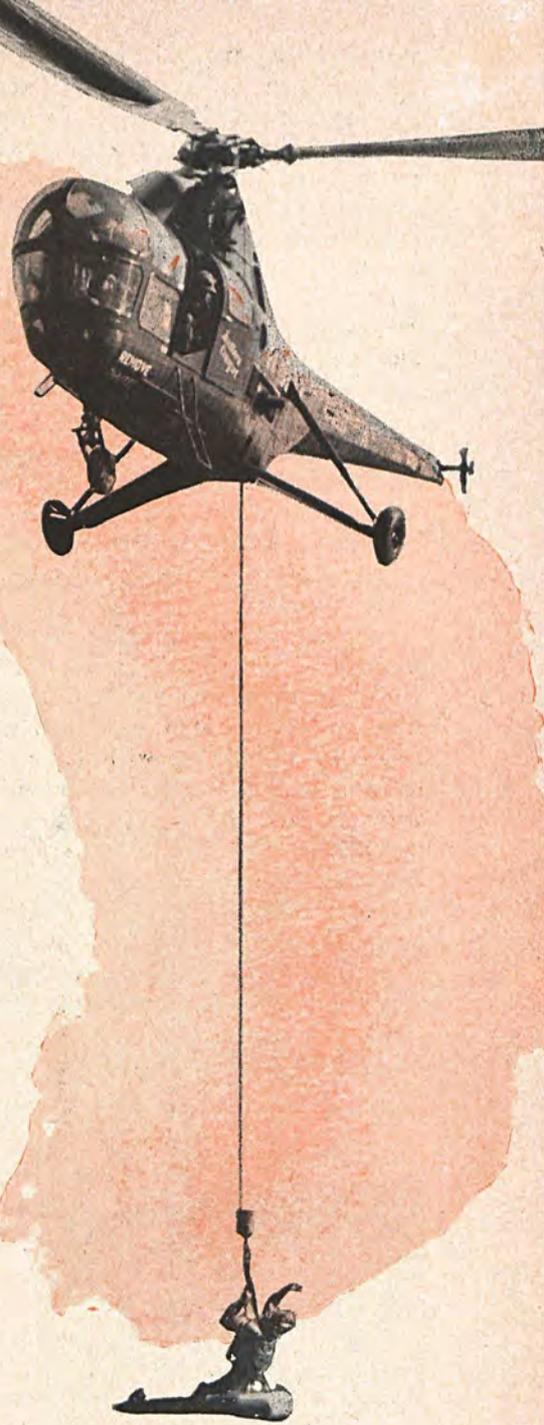
It is ironic that the renown of the Marine Corps for physical valor should sometimes outshine an equally well-earned reputation for cerebral daring. Certainly it took real intellectual courage in the 1920s for a little group of Marine and Navy officers to fly in the face of world-wide military opinion. At a time when Captain B. H. Liddell Hart and other critics were preaching the doctrine of the all-powerful defensive, these Fleet Marine Force pioneers believed that the most dangerous form of the offensive could be made to succeed.

Their faith was vindicated in World War II by the American invasions of Africa, Sicily, Italy, Normandy and the Japanese islands of the Pacific. Most of these victories were won either by Marines or Marine-trained Army and Navy units using Fleet Marine Force techniques. Not a single major defeat could be

charged against a system of amphibious assault which a British historian of World War II has called "in all probability . . . the most far-reaching tactical innovation of the war."<sup>1</sup>

But the explosion that rocked Hiroshima in 1945 also shook the confidence of many Americans in the tactics which won some of our most brilliant victories. Again a little group of Marine officers had the intellectual courage to differ, even though several famous names were

<sup>1</sup>MajGen J. F. C. Fuller: *The Second World War, 1939-1945*, (London, 1948).



included among the pessimists. These Marine officers conceded that the atom bomb had probably rendered obsolete the great naval concentrations of past amphibious operations. Tactical dispersion, they maintained, was the answer to "the bomb" — a degree of dispersion which could be put into effect only by means of vertical envelopment and aerial supply. But such past methods of vertical envelopment as parachute or glider landings were not satisfactory. The ultimate solution, said these Marine officers, was to be found in the possibilities opened up by the helicopter as the "flying LST" of the new age of atomic warfare.

Any such brief summary must run the risk of over-simplification, for it was a complex new field of tactics that the Marine Corps set out to cultivate in accordance with its basic mission as America's force-in-readiness. In fact, the entire pattern of amphibious assault had to be taken apart and rebuilt around the new concepts of dispersion and vertical envelopment. It took imagination as well as cerebral daring in 1946, moreover, to work out combat techniques for a type of aircraft so new that only a few had made an obscure appearance in the recent war.



**HMX-1 . . . the original crew**

Vertical flight, it is true, had already been realized to some extent in the autogiro of the past two decades—an aircraft which depended on a propeller as well as an overhead rotor revolving without mechanical aid during flight. In 1932 the Marine Corps purchased one of the early machines and put it through the first test flights to be given any rotary-winged aircraft in the field.<sup>2</sup>

☛ THESE FLIGHTS TOOK place during the Marine intervention to restore order in Nicaragua. Marine fliers in Nicaragua and Haiti had already worked out such techniques as dive-bombing, which was popularly and erroneously credited in 1940 to Luftwaffe aviators. But the autogiro was found wanting by the Marines for combat purposes after exhaustive tests established that its payload was deficient.

The world had to wait until 1937 for a true helicopter depending entirely on power-driven rotary wings for both vertical lift and forward motion. This first practicable helicopter was a German product, but its military possibilities apparently did not appeal to the Luftwaffe generals. Altogether, rotary-winged aircraft played a very minor part in World War II, and not until 1942 did Igor Sikorsky's experiments give the United States its first helicopter capable of sustained flight.

Four years later, when the Marine Corps began its studies, it would have been rank exaggeration to say that helicopter combat techniques were in their infancy. Most of them had not yet been conceived. World War II had left few precepts, even though several Sikorsky helicopters were flown by the U. S. Army Air Corps in Burma and the Philippines during the last months of the war in the Pacific. But these machines, which seem to have been regarded as curiosities, made little impression on operations decided entirely by conventional aircraft.

The Marine Corps was starting from scratch, therefore, when it commissioned its first helicopter squadron late in 1947. Commanded by Colonel Edward C. Dyer, HMX-1

was assigned two general missions:

- (1) "Develop techniques and tactics in connection with the movement of assault troops by helicopter in amphibious operations;
- (2) "Evaluate a small helicopter as a replacement for the present OY-type aircraft to be used for gunfire spotting, observation and liaison missions in connection with amphibious operations."

The original eight officers and one enlisted man had no helicopter experience whatever. Colonel Dyer took his flight training at the helicopter factory, and other HMX-1 pilots and mechanics were trained by the few qualified instructors of the Naval Air Schools at Lakehurst, New Jersey. Two months passed before this pioneer helicopter unit received its first aircraft—two four-place Sikorsky machines (HO3S-1) designed for utility work. The first mission, other than training, was a search for the route to be followed by a salvage party in removing a mired-down "Weasel" (amphibious jeep) from a creek near Quantico.

☛ FROM THIS MODEST beginning, HMX-1 reached the stage six months later of participating with 16 officers, 40 enlisted men and five HO3Ss in Operation Packard II. This was an amphibious command post exercise held by the Marine Corps Schools from 10 to 26 May 1948 in the area of New River, N. C. As it concerned HMX-1, the exercise was an initial test to determine the value of the helicopter in the movement of troops for an amphibious assault. The squadron had two weeks of preliminary shipboard training on the carrier *Palau*, and the ensuing operation proved that the new amphibious team of carrier and helicopter had many advantages over the old system of transport and landing boat.

On the evidence of the New River tests, the Marine Corps School brought out in 1948 their first doctrinal publication on the tactical employment of helicopters. Theory and practice went hand in hand at Quantico as HMX-1 pilots conducted experiments in such diverse missions as traffic direction, rescue work, formation flying, fighter evasive tactics, high-speed wire laying and

<sup>2</sup>For a detailed account of the tests, see the article *The Marine Autogiro in Nicaragua* in the GAZETTE of February 1953.

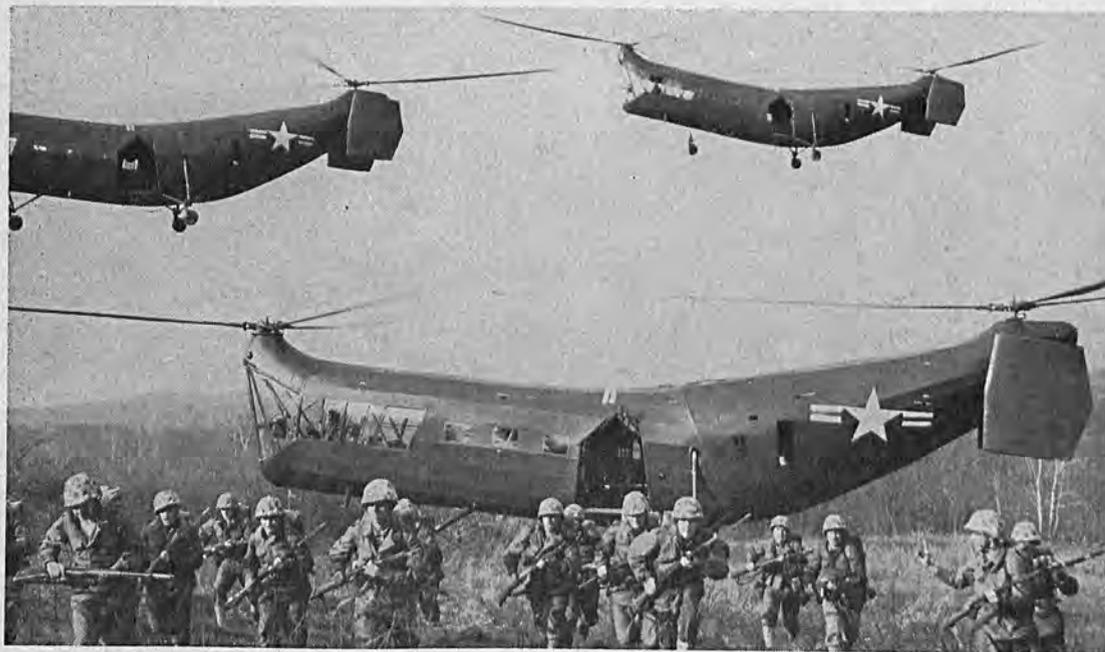
airborne public address system. In August 1948, the squadron received its first HTL-3, a two-place Bell helicopter useful for artillery spotting, reconnaissance and aerial photography. Troop movement training was given a great impetus this same month with the arrival of the first HRP-1 — a twin-rotored, 10-passenger Piasecki helicopter, then the world's largest, which was soon to be dubbed the "Flying Banana."

In November an HO3S-1 from the squadron participated in the exer-

An instructive comparison was offered between old and new amphibious assault techniques when the landing boats hit the beaches as the "Flying Bananas" were lifting troops five miles inland for a simulated vertical envelopment. Many of the boats were swamped in the rough seas, and others were long delayed in tying up to the AKAs on their return. Yet, the effectiveness of the helicopters, each carrying six fully equipped combat troops, was little impaired as they shuttled back and

exercises were presented again at Quantico on 15 June when the Marine Corps gave a demonstration of an airborne amphibious assault for the President of the United States.

Only 10 days later a Communist aggression in Korea led to United Nations intervention. U. S. armed forces were ordered to active duty in the Asiatic peninsula. This meant that Marine helicopter theory would soon be put to the test of combat, for the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade was activated on 7 July



With the "Flying Banana" came troop movement training

ercises of the Second Task Fleet in the Newfoundland area. And on Christmas day three HRPs sailed from Norfolk on the *Saipan* for a rescue mission in Greenland which afforded good Arctic training even though it proved unnecessary. These cold weather operations were followed in the spring of 1949 by tests under tropical conditions when four HO3Ss and an HTL took part on board the *Palau* in the Atlantic Fleet Exercises (FLEX-49) off Puerto Rico.

Nine HRPs were employed by HMX-1, in conjunction with Marine air and ground forces, to demonstrate helicopter combat techniques at Quantico in May 1949 before members of Congress and high military officials. Shortly afterward the squadron left for New River to board the *Palau* and take part in Operation Packard III.

forth from the carrier to their inland objective. Cover was provided by fighter aircraft simulating smoke and by strafing attacks on defensive forces.

The first week of 1950 found HMX-1 with a strength of 26 officers (of whom 21 were fliers) and 83 enlisted men, including two pilots. The squadron was represented by a detachment in Operation Cross-over, held by the 2d Mar Div at Camp Lejeune during the last three days in April. Here a helicopter lifted a 75mm pack howitzer with its crew and ammunition during the simulated amphibious assault.

Operation Packard IV took place late in May, and the aircraft of HMX-1 made round-trip flights between the carrier *Mindoro* and the North Carolina target area. Most of the helicopter techniques of these

at Camp Pendleton under the command of BrigGen Edward A. Craig, and exactly a week later this reinforced RCT sailed from San Diego to the Far East.

The air component, commanded by BrigGen Thomas J. Cushman, consisted of three fighter squadrons and an observation squadron of MAG-33, 1st Marine Air Wing. Included in this air strength was the first helicopter unit in history to be trained and organized for combat duty—the seven officers, 30 enlisted men and four HO3S-1 aircraft of the rotary-wing group of VMO-6. Major Vincent J. Gottschalk was the CO of a squadron completed by a fixed-wing group of six officers, 43 enlisted men and six OY-2 planes.

VMO-6 sailed for Korea on 14 July under the operational control of the brigade and under the 1st



*'Copter lifts gave . . .*

Marine Air Wing in administrative and logistical respects. The helicopter contingent had been sent from Quantico to California by HMX-1, and during the voyage to Japan the "flying windmills" carried mail from one ship to another. After disembarkation at Kobe, the four helicopters were part of a VMO-6 flight echelon which continued by air to Pusan, arriving on 2 August. A surface echelon followed by LST two days later.

The mission of VMO squadrons had been stated in 1949 as the conduct of "tactical air reconnaissance, artillery spotting and other flight operations within the capabilities of assigned aircraft in support of ground units."<sup>3</sup> This definition, of course, left plenty of room for the 'copters to show what they could do under combat conditions. The first demonstration came on the very first morning in Korea, when General Craig and his aides utilized the rotary-wing aircraft not only for reconnaissance but also for locating assembly areas and directing troop movements.

The brigade commander's initial flight took him from Pusan about

30 miles to the Changwon area. In route he landed to give instructions to the CO of the advance battalion. The pilot, 1stLt Gustave F. Lueddeke, set the HO3S-1 down in a yard between three native huts, and took off vertically a few minutes later. Next, General Craig selected the site for his forward CP and deposited his personal gear. Then he proceeded to Masan 10 miles away to confer with LtGen Walton W. Walker, CG 8th Army, and Maj-Gen William B. Kean, CG 25th Inf Div. And on his return trip, General Craig landed three more times to issue orders to troop commanders.

Only the helicopter could have made this itinerary possible within a period of a few hours. A fixed-wing plane could not have landed at will, and a jeep could not have covered the same route before nightfall over narrow, twisting roads choked with Army and Marine vehicles.

Evacuation of casualties as a helicopter mission had an early test on 4 August with the bringing in of a wounded and a dead Marine. On the following day, three more casualties were taken to the rear, two of them from the steep slopes of ridges. For evacuation purposes, two 'copters were modified by removing the window on the starboard side and installing straps in the cabin on the opposite side to hold a stretcher securely.

Actual combat experience tended to deflate the legend of helicopter vulnerability that had grown up in training exercises. Despite the limitations of rotary-wing aircraft as to

speed and altitude, their mobility enabled them to fly low and take advantage of hills, valleys and other natural cover for protection. The OYs proved to be more vulnerable, though faster and offering less of a target. On 6 August a "grasshopper" was lost as a result of enemy action, but the pilot and observer swam ashore after ditching in the sea. Three weeks later the squadron had its first fatality when enemy fire brought down another OY, and 1stLt Harold J. Davis died of injuries.

Both types of VMO-6 aircraft remained on call from dawn to dusk during the first two weeks in Korea. Enemy fire soon became an old story for pilots on reconnaissance flights or searching the mountain areas for bands of infiltrating Communists. Shortly after dawn on 7 August, as the Marines jumped off at Chindong-ni, General Craig's helicopter was the target of enemy mortars on the way to the advanced command post, making it necessary for him to land and continue on foot. Pilot Lueddeke managed to take off again without harm, though two shells exploded within a hundred yards.

The UN attack had the distinction of being the first sustained counter-offensive to be launched against the NK invaders who had advanced from Seoul to within 50 miles of Pusan. This vital supply port had to be held, and Chinju was the objective of Marine and U. S. Army assault troops under the operational control of CG 25th Inf Div. The 40 flights of VMO-6 aircraft that day included reconnais-



*. . . rocket batteries . . .*

<sup>3</sup> FMF Pac SOP #3-5, VMO Squadrons, dtd 28 Nov 49.

sance missions, evacuation of casualties and drops of food and water.

On 8 August the helicopters set a new record when the first casualty evacuation after darkness was completed successfully by Captain Victor A. Armstrong, who brought out a wounded regimental surgeon. Here it may be noted that the sensational publicity stunts of stateside factory pilots had given the American public an exaggerated idea of the aeronautical progress of rotary-wing aircraft. Actually, the helicopters of 1950 were comparable to the fixed-wing planes of World War I. Make-shifts often had to be devised by VMO-6 pilots who flew with their heads outside the window for vision in rainstorms, and who shifted rocks about the cabin to maintain the bal-

had crash-landed behind the enemy lines. Unfortunately, Captain Moses was shot down again three days later, and the unconscious flier drowned in a rice paddy before Captain Eugene J. Pope could rescue him in a VMO-6 helicopter.

Brilliant close air support was provided by the two Marine carrier-borne fighter squadrons, VMF-214 and VMF-323, as well as elements of Japan-based VMF(N)-513. Often their results owed to the reconnaissance of VMO-6 aircraft, and there was no better morale factor than the knowledge that the 'copters would attempt a rescue if a fighter pilot crashed in enemy territory.

Heavy NK resistance in the Chindong-ni area held up the infantry attack from 7 to 9 August, and Gen-

largely been lost in modern times. Obviously it was no longer possible or even desirable for a general to lead the advance in person. But it could be argued that the pendulum had swung back too far when a division commander and his staff were sometimes remote figures to junior line officers. General Craig's helicopter did a good deal to restore the balance, however, by bridging the time and space gap which usually separated a present-day commander from troops in combat. The Marine general became a familiar sight to company and even platoon commanders as he landed to give oral instructions, and his energetic leadership had much to do with the smashing of NK resistance.

Marine and Army units raced along parallel routes toward Chinju, driving the battered NK forces ahead of them. As the first United Nations victory of the war, it was heartening to troops who had been retreating since the initial Communist aggression. But with the objective in sight, the Marines were pulled back on the 13th in preparation for a new counter-attack in the Naktong Bulge area.

As a preliminary, General Craig received orders from General Kean at noon on the 12th to rush a reinforced battalion about 25 miles to the rear in the Chindong-ni area, where infiltrating Communists had overrun an Army artillery battalion and threatened to cut the MSR. Only the helicopter could have enabled the Marine general to execute in a single afternoon a maneuver calling for the 25-mile road lift of a reinforced battalion with its munitions, and an assault in the opposite direction. After taking off from his CP at Kosong, he made two landings to give orders to the regimental and battalion commanders. Next, he spotted columns of trucks from the air and landed twice more to direct them to dump their loads and provide transportation. His G-3 and the battalion commander had meanwhile been sent ahead by helicopter to reconnoiter the objective area and plan for the Marines to deploy and attack upon arrival. Owing to these preparations, the assault troops seized part of the enemy position before darkness and finished the job in the morning.



### . . . a new mobility

ance so essential to safety with this delicately-poised type of aircraft.

Rescue missions were added to their duties on 10 August when 1stLt Doyle Cole's Corsair was hit by anti-aircraft fire while flying close support. As it glided into the sea not far offshore, General Craig looked on from Lieutenant Lueddeke's helicopter. And it was the brigade commander who supplied the muscle to hoist Cole from his raft into the machine as it hovered a few feet over the water. Later that same afternoon Lueddeke rescued a second Corsair pilot, Captain Vivian Moses, who

eral Craig was directed by General Kean to assume operational control of all Army as well as Marine units. During this critical period the brigade commander relied upon VMO-6 helicopters for command and staff missions. And though he could not actually be in two places at once, General Craig gave that illusion with his frequent landings to confer at Army CPs or direct commanders of combat units.

Such occasions had a historical significance. For the helicopter promised to bring back a personal element to command relations that had

From his helicopter, General Craig saw the attack launched at sunset while flying to Masan for a conference with General Kean. There he was informed that all Marine and Army forces were to be pulled out at daybreak, and he returned to Kosong just before nightfall to plan a withdrawal that was carried out successfully in the morning.

Helicopters were used by the brigade command and staff to maintain positive control over the heavily engaged rear-guard battalion as it broke off contact with the enemy. One of the machines "dodged" enemy 20mm fire to drop panels to Marines on a 1,600-foot ridgeline, and another helicopter had rifle grenades lobbed at it after landing at the battalion CP. VMO-6 flights that day totaled 45, adding up to 53.9 hours in the air.

The Marine ground-air team, as the "firemen" of the Pusan perimeter, launched two more counter-attacks before being relieved on 5 September. In both of these Naktong Rulge assaults, VMO-6 aircraft carried out their usual missions, though the HO3S-1s scored a new "first" on 3 September with a successful helicopter wire-laying mission in combat. A total of 898 flights and 805 hours was reported by the squadron for August, of which the helicopters made 580 flights totaling 348 hours and the OYs 318 flights for a total of 457 hours.

Throughout the brigade operations the helicopter had been, as General Craig put it, the "emergency weapon" of the command and staff. Early in August he sent a message to LtGen Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., CG FMFPac, another warm advocate of rotary-wing aircraft, requesting that machines of troop-carrying capacity be attached to the brigade. But such equipment was not available at the time, and helicopter troop lifts in Korea had to wait until the following year.

The helicopter had not made its excellent showing, however, at the expense of the OY plane. One of the primary missions of HMX-1, it may be recalled, was determining the relative value of the two types for the missions of an observation squadron. On a basis of training exercises, it was recommended at Quantico that OY planes be replaced by helicopters. But this decision was reversed,

on the strength of combat experience with the brigade, by a recommendation of VMO-6: "A composite squadron composed of light OY-type liaison aircraft and liaison-type helicopters is considered both desirable and necessary."

In preparation for the Inchon amphibious assault, VMO-6 passed under the operational control of the

rescue missions for a total of 30.2 hours. The results were five artillery registrations, four artillery fire missions and the rescue of a Marine fighter pilot in enemy territory north of the 38th parallel.

After the crossing of the Han, the river separated the division CP from the units attacking the approaches to Seoul. Traffic was so congested that



*An easy way over saw-toothed ridges*

landing force, the 1st Mar Div commanded by MajGen Oliver P. Smith. The two echelons of the carrier-based squadron reached the target area with a strength expanded to 15 officers, 95 enlisted men, five OY-2 planes and six HO3S-1 aircraft.

No part was taken in the landings of 15 September, but on D+1 a helicopter flew the artillery observer conducting the first spot mission for the 11th Marines. And at 1000 on the 18th, only a few hours after the ground forces repulsed an enemy counter-attack, Captain Armstrong made the first landing at captured Kimpo Airfield, with General Shepherd as a passenger in his helicopter.

As the operation turned into a grinding assault on Seoul against mounting resistance, the Kimpo-based aircraft of VMO-6 had their job cut out for them. Operating over a large area, they were frequently exposed to intense small arms and automatic fire. Two OYs and a helicopter were destroyed during the three-week offensive with the loss of two pilots killed and a third missing as a probable POW.

It was a fairly typical day's work on 23 September when VMO-6 flew 10 reconnaissance, five artillery spot, one utility, six evacuation and two

jeeps taking the pontoon ferry were subject to long delays. Helicopters offered the solution, and both General Smith and General Craig made daily use of them to visit battalion CPs on the north bank of the Han.

Helicopters provided the answer again the following November when the 1st Mar Div was so extended in northeast Korea that units at Hagaru were about 50 miles from the division CP at Hungnam. Following an administrative landing at Wonsan, the Marines had unusual command and staff problems. As a result of personal reconnaissance flights in VMO-6 aircraft, General Smith ordered the Chosin Reservoir MSR to be strengthened for tanks, and a C-47 airstrip to be commenced at Hagaru. Thanks to such far-sighted command decisions, the 1st Mar Div was probably the best prepared major unit on the UN front when the first CCF counter-offensive exploded late in November.

VMO-6 began the operation with a strength of 15 officers and 87 enlisted men plus seven aerial observers attached from the division. Aircraft consisted of six HO3S-1s, three OY-2s and two L5-G types, flying from Yonpo Airfield along with fighter squadrons of the 1st MAW.

VMO-6 pilots tackled their greatest task so far when the CCF attacks of late November divided the 1st Mar Div into five self-contained perimeters along the MSR from Chinhung-ni to Yudam-ni. For a few days the only dependable physical contact was provided by helicopters, and VMO-6 operations were conducted from the half-finished Hagaru airstrip in order to save time. Rugged terrain, sub-zero cold and high altitudes added to the trials of fliers who often encountered CCF small arms and automatic fire. Two pilots were killed in action and the aircraft required frequent repairs. Many lives of ground Marines were saved, however, by emergency helicopter evacuation of casualties from isolated perimeters. Other VMO-6 missions contributed in tactical respects to the fighting breakout of the 1st Mar Div with most of its equipment. From 28 October to 15 December the squadron made 1,544

by Operations Killer and Ripper, then by the CCF counter-offensives of April and May. And when the 8th Army struck back in June, the Marines had their hardest fighting since the Chosin Reservoir breakout.

VMO-6 had grown by this time to a strength of 28 officers and 94 enlisted men with 21 aircraft—seven OY-2, four L-19, five HO3S-1 and five HTL-4 types. Infantry casualties were heavy during the first two weeks of the month, and in June the helicopters evacuated 198 wounded Marines from mountain terrain while making three rescues behind enemy lines.

On 15 July the division went into 8th Army reserve in the Yanggu-Inje area, but VMO-6 continued its reconnaissance flights during the ensuing training period. As the first year of Korean operations neared an end, it might have appeared that Marine helicopters had performed in combat nearly every mission except the one

rying five or six fully armed troops each.

HMR-161 landed at Pusan on 2 September under operational control of the 1st Mar Div, which had recently mounted an offensive in the Punchbowl area. It did not take the new outfit long to get into action. Only a few days after moving up to the front, HMR-161 indoctrinated troops of the 1st Shore Party Bn on 12 September in loading and landing techniques. And at 1600 the following day the squadron initiated the first mass helicopter re-supply operation in history.

Operation Windmill I consisted of lifting a day's supplies for the 2d Bn, 1st Marines a distance of about seven miles. Shore party personnel accompanied the first four aircraft; they landed with picks and shovels to clear an area for the dumps, and 78 casualties were evacuated on return flights. Performance did not fall short of plan, and 14 helicopters



*Flying behind the hills, they brought out the wounded*

flights for a total of 1,624 hours. The chief missions were as follows:

*Reconnaissance*—OYs, 393; helicopters, 64; *Transportation*—OYs 130; helicopters, 421; *Evacuation*—OYs, 29; helicopters, 191; *Liaison*—OYs, 35; helicopters, 90; *Artillery Spot*—OYs, 39; helicopters, 0; *Utility*—OYs, 26; helicopters, 60; *Rescue*—OYs, 0; helicopters, 11.

This was about the pattern that VMO-6 missions were to take in support of the 1st Mar Div as it participated in 8th Army attacks throughout the spring of 1951. The Pohang-Andong guerrilla hunt was followed

originally visioned—the mission of transporting troops and supplies for future amphibious assaults. A step had already been taken to remedy this lack, however, when Marine Transport Helicopter Squadron (HMR) 161 was commissioned on 15 January at El Toro as a unit in Aircraft FMFPac. After a seven-month training period under the command of LtCol George W. Herring, the squadron sailed for Korea in August with a strength of 43 officers and 244 men. Equipment consisted of 15 Sikorsky transport (HRS-1) helicopters capable of car-

were employed for 28 flights amounting in all to 14.1 hours. A total of 18,848 pounds was lifted to a landing point a hundred feet square at an altitude of 2,100 feet.

Windmill II a few days later added little to knowledge already gained, and meanwhile the squadron prepared for Operation Summit. This time the problem was tactical—the lift of Recon Co to a razor-back ridge, Hill 884, for the relief of a ROK unit. The helicopters flew reconnaissance on the position and held practice flights in which the troops rehearsed their descent from

30-foot knotted ropes. And on 20 September, despite the fog, HMR-161 completed the first helicopter-borne landing of a combat unit in history by lifting 224 fully equipped troops to the objective and 17,772 pounds of cargo in addition to supplies carried by the men.

Two sites had been selected in advance just below the crest. Only about 50 feet square, owing to the rocky terrain, these landing points had sheer drops on two sides. An assault squad of Recon Co landed at the outset to cover the SP troops who followed to clear the first area.

Flying time from the loading point averaged eight minutes, and it took about 90 seconds for four men with

and still keep up an adequate reserve. The left flank being weakest, a five-mile helicopter lift of a company from the division reserve bivouac area was contemplated in case of urgent need. And since an emergency would probably take place at night, it was decided that a full-dress rehearsal should be held for a lift under cover of darkness.

This was the inception of Operation Blackbird. The rehearsal was carried out on the morning of 27 September, with night conditions being simulated as closely as possible. But darkness itself could not be simulated, and many difficulties remained to be overcome at H-hour of 1930 that evening.

***VMO-6 . . . pilots flew more than a thousand missions in forty-eight days***



full equipment to land by rope. A second landing point was opened 20 minutes after the first, and five men were carried in each 'copter thereafter to exit on the ground in an average of 20 seconds. Thus the troops continued to pour in steadily until the completion of the operation in 65 flights amounting to 31.2 hours flying time and four hours over-all time. As a final touch, eight miles of wire were laid in 15 minutes to the CP of the 1st Marines.

On this same day, after the successful completion of the offensive begun in late August, the mission of the 1st Mar Div was changed to one of occupying and defending. The assigned frontage of 20,000 meters made it a problem to man the MSR

A company of the 2d Bn, 1st Marines had been selected, and each helicopter carried five fully equipped troops. It took 41 flights by six machines to transport the 233 men in the over-all time of two hours and 20 minutes, as compared to the nine hours required for a march over mountain trails. Still, it could not be said that Operation Blackbird was an unclouded success. The flare pots illuminating the embarkation area were frequently blown out by rotor wash, and meanwhile they blinded the pilots by creating a glare on plexiglass windshields. Battery-operated beach lanterns in the landing zone were hard to distinguish from other lights.

Artillery flashes added to the visi-

bility troubles of pilots taking off from a river bed and climbing through three mountain passes to reach the objective. Although care had been taken in rehearsal to memorize terrain features, difficulty was experienced in locating the Punch-bowl landing area. The shuttle system was used, with intervals of three minutes between departures, and the round-trip covered 13 miles. Good communications were maintained between the aircraft base, embarkation point, landing zone and helicopters in flight by means of a VHF circuit.

But even though there had been confusion, Operation Blackbird left many encouraging precedents as well as a few object lessons. And two weeks later HMR-161 completed a



***Korea proved***



*ub for the windmills*

helicopter lift that made headlines all over the world—the lift of an entire Marine battalion and its equipment.

The purpose was to acquire planning experience by determining time factors of such a tactical movement. An opportunity arose when the 3d Bn of the 7th Marines, commanded by LtCol Harry W. Edwards, was directed to relieve a battalion of the 5th Marines. Oral warning orders were issued on 8 October, and members of the battalion TACP reconnoitered the assigned assembly area

located directly behind the MLR and screened from enemy observation. Planning was conducted as if for an amphibious operation, with the assignment and loading table for the HRS-1s being modeled after that of a boat assignment table.

As preparations reached the final stage on the 10th, all officers of the battalion watched a loading and unloading demonstration by enlisted men of Item Co, assisted by SP personnel. Operation Bumblebee began at 1000 the next morning when the first helicopter team departed. The flight path of 15 miles, though longer than necessary, took advantage of the concealment offered by valleys and defiladed areas. Ten to 12 minutes were required to cover one leg of the journey, but six men with combat equipment could be loaded in less than 30 seconds. Dispatchers at Red and White loading zones checked off departing teams against the roster, and any shortage was filled immediately by a man from the casual pool.

AS THE HELICOPTERS landed at intervals of a minute, the troops were briskly assisted to the ground by the SP personnel who had cleared the two landing points. A six-man team could exit in 17 seconds, and new arrivals were hustled by guides to their own company assembly areas.

Following are the principal statistics of Operation Bumblebee, which alone tell a story:

Number of helicopters: 12.  
 Number of flights: 156.  
 Total flight time: 65.9 mins.  
 Over-all time: 5.50 hrs.  
 Number of troops lifted: 958.  
 Average weight per man: 340 lbs.  
 Total weight lifted: 229,920 lbs.

Newspaper correspondents in Korea were quick to sense that tactical history had been created, and wire stories of Operation Bumblebee made the front pages all over the world. Gratifying as this acclaim was, however, Marine planners considered the achievement a beginning rather than an end. A great deal more perspiration as well as inspiration would be needed if the Marine Corps was to maintain its leadership in developing helicopter combat techniques, and HMR-161 completed two more operations in October.

Battalion lifts by helicopter were to become routine events in the 1st Mar Div sector during the next few months, but Operation Bumblebee remained a landmark of the progress made in a little over a year of Marine combat experience. The concepts advanced in 1946 at Quantico had stood the test of war, and future ship-to-shore assaults would owe immeasurably to these pioneer helicopter operations in Korea. USMC



*Battalion lifts became commonplace after Operation Bumblebee*

